

SAPIENTIA

Readings for Philosophic Inquiry



Henry Imler, Editor

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Sapientia: Readings for Philosophic Inquiry

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Introduction

What is Philosophy?

A Focus on Inquiry

Philosophy can be defined in many ways. In our class, we will define Philosophy as “rational, critical inquiry into the Cosmos.” So, let’s look at each element of the definition in turn.

By **inquiry** we simply mean *questioning*. We invoke the notions of curiosity and a drive to understand. We pose problems. We try to look at issues from as many viewpoints as possible. We try out new conceptualizations.

By **rational thinking**, we mean refer to thinking governed *reason* instead of

- **culture**, what our people happen to be doing and thinking;
- **mysticism**, rooted in ineffable experiences reduced to symbolic descriptions; or
- **emotion**, intense responses to stimuli not rooted in conscious thought.

Notice that the above modes of thinking are not bad or illegitimate, just that they do not constitute rational thinking. Rational thinking is characterized by

- **coherence** each element of our reasoning fits with all other elements;
- **pragmatism** the product of our reasoning is workable in everyday life; and
- **correspondence** our ideas, premises, and conclusions match up with the world itself, insofar as we are able to measure and observe phenomena.

By **critical thinking**, we refer to thinking that is recursive in nature. Any time we encounter new information or new ideas, we double back and rethink our prior conclusions on the subject to see if any other conclusions are better suited. ¹

¹ This discussion of critical thinking is drawn from Professor Barrett’s critical thinking model. For more, see Mike Barrett, “Critical Thinking,” in *Reading, Thinking, Writing* (LOGOS Project at MACC, 2017), <https://app.box.com/s/smd3oexhfevqpkjhwx3v7zmydnfzw75l>.

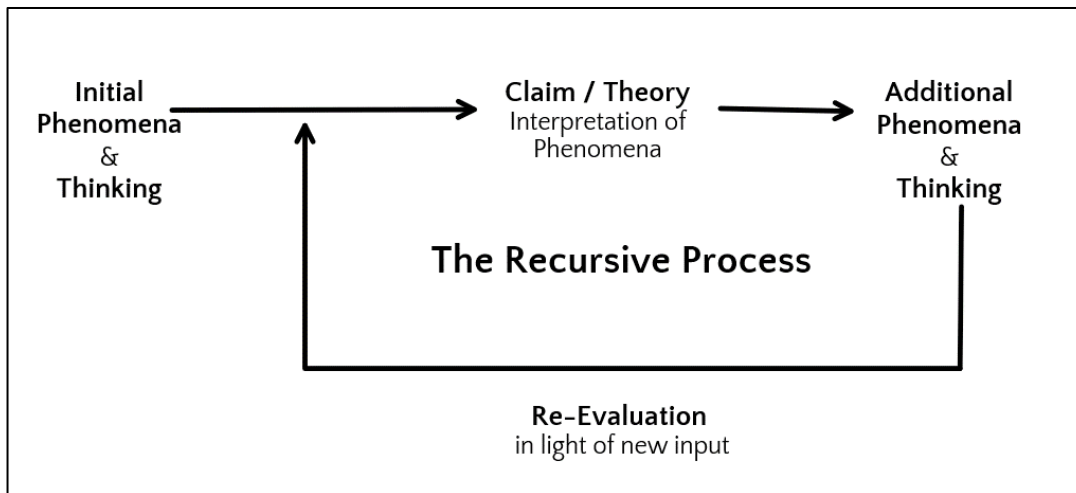


Figure 1 The Critical Thinking Process

Critical thinking can be contrasted with **authoritarian thinking**. This type of thinking seeks to *preserve* the original conclusion. Here, thinking and conclusions are policed, because to question the system is to threaten the system. And threats to the system demand a defensive response. Critical thinking is short circuited in authoritarian systems so that the conclusions are *conserved* instead of being open for revision.

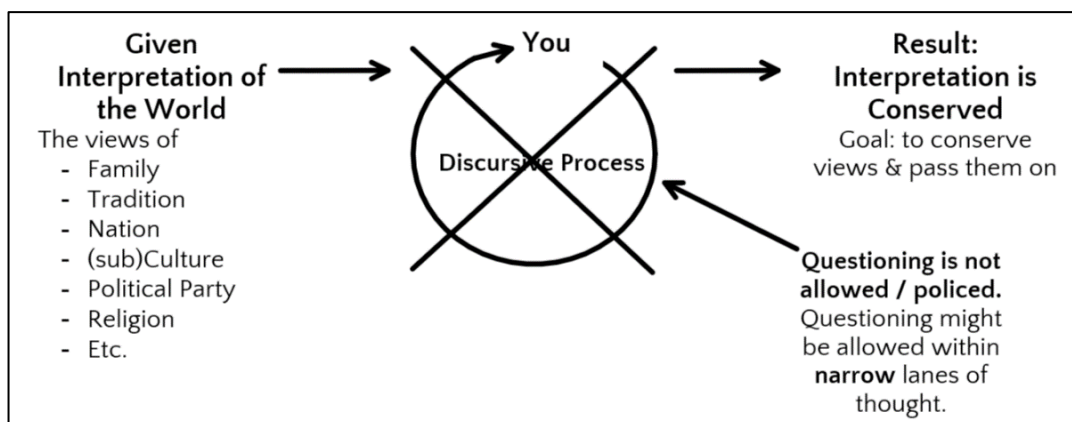


Figure 2 The Authoritarian Thinking Process

We might also frame critical thinking in terms of having an open vs. an arrogant mind. The Greek philosopher Plato used two terms that help us distinguish types of poor thinking and their corresponding antidotes. In the dialog *Alcibiades*, Socrates accuses his friend of being both ignorant and stupid.² **Agnoeo (ignorance)** for Plato, is a *simple lack*

² Plato, "Alcibiades," in *Plato in 12 Volumes*, trans. Harold North Flower, vol. 1 (London: Harvard University Press, 1966), sec. 118b, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0059.tlg013.perseus-eng1:118b>.

of knowledge something which can be fixed with ease. **Amathia (stupidity)**, on the other hand, is a *lack of awareness of one's ignorance*.³ The opposite of amathia is not knowledge itself, but of an **awareness of one's ignorance**. Socrates, in *The Apology*, concludes his search for wisdom in realizing that he is ignorant.⁴ And so humility and vulnerability are key parts of critical thinking.

Finally, we have **Cosmos**. By this we mean that philosophy is curious about *everything*. There is nothing under the Sun (or beyond it) that philosophy does not seek to understand, to investigate, to wonder. That's right, for everything one encounters; from how triangles work to the rate of evaporation of black holes, to methods of defeating fascism, we can engage it with philosophic inquiry. Because of this unique relationship to all fields of inquiry, philosophy has been called the Mother of the Sciences.⁵

Nearly all of what we now consider science began as a field of philosophic inquiry that has developed into a highly specialized subfield. This is true of math, biology, physics, et cetera. In these fields, we not only have been tremendously successful in predicting outcomes, but more importantly, we are able to rely upon either *logic* (relation between ideas) or *empiricism* (observation and measurement). But there are some questions that logic and empiricism alone cannot address.

What we commonly refer to as philosophy are those questions that are left over from the success of the sciences.

- **Epistemology** — What is the nature of knowledge?
- **Metaphysics** — What is the nature of being?
- **Ethics** — What is the nature of value?
- **Politics** — What is the nature of justice?

Notice that all of these questions are

1. important; and

³ Euripides, in *Bacchae*, invokes the idea of “willful blindness” with this term. See Robert Scott and H.G. Liddell, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, accessed March 21, 2018, <https://www.amazon.com/Intermediate-Greek-English-Lexicon-Founded-Seventh/dp/1849025959>. and Euripides and T.A. Buckley, “Bacchae,” in *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850), l. 490, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0006.tlg017.perseus-eng1:476-518>.

⁴ Plato, “The Apology,” in *Plato in 12 Volumes*, trans. Harold North Flower, vol. 1 (London: Harvard University Press, 1966), secs. 20e–23c, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0059.tlg002.perseus-eng1:20e>.

⁵ Edward Grant, *The Nature of Natural Philosophy in the Late Middle Ages (Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, Volume 52)* (CUA Press, 2010), 164.

2. not answerable by means of mere reasoning and empiricism.

Therefore, they are difficult to fully resolve.

But this does not mean that we can answer them however we want or that each attempt to answer them is equally valid. We do expect certain things from possible good answers. Here we will return to the three criteria we listed above: coherence, pragmatism, and correspondence. Our answers to each of these questions should have one or more of those attributes. Those answers that don't should be discarded; those that do should be *tentatively* accepted.

And so, philosophy is hard. For one, we can never have certain answers and there is comfort in feeling certain. We might claim that the only certainty in philosophy comes from so-called “negative philosophy” in identifying what answers don't work, aren't coherent, or are disconnected with what we observe in the world.^{6,7} Second, part of the reason it can feel so annoying is because it seems like it should not be hard. After all, philosophy is focused upon thinking, and we all think — thinking is easy! (Right?) We do it without...well, thinking. Yet philosophy involves not just thinking but *thinking well*. Of course, it is true that we all think. But thinking, like basketball, math, baking and singing, is something we can get better at. So, one of our aims in this course is to get better at thinking.

Admittedly, doing philosophy will not *solve* the problems of the world (even though it might point us in the right direction). But if you engage with philosophy, then you will be developing yourself as a thinker who thinks well, sometimes called a critical thinker. This is why philosophy is useful not merely to would-be philosophers, but also to *any* would-be thinkers, perhaps heading off to make decisions in law, medicine, structural engineering — just about anything that requires you to think effectively and clearly. And so doing philosophy is valuable for everyone.

Philosophy as a Habit

⁶ This view draws from the idea of Negative Theology, also known as Apophatic Theology which claims that because the Divine is fundamentally beyond what we finite beings can conceptualize, the only true claims we can make about the Divine are those that describe what the Divine is *not*. **And** even then we might find that our conclusions are still tentative, uncertain, or unfinished.

⁷ For some discussion on positive vs. negative philosophy (critical rationalism), see: Herbert Marcuse, “Positive and Negative Philosophy,” in *Reason and Revolution*, accessed March 25, 2018, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/reason/ch02-2.htm>.

Philosophy, like much of life, is more **developing an attitude** vs. accumulating facts. Paulo Freire develops the idea of the “Banking Model of Education” where facts, concepts, *et cetera* are deposited in the student by a learned master.⁸ Such a view considers education to be static and a mere tool in the accumulation of wealth. You may recall politicians on both sides talk about education primarily in terms of job training. While this is a useful benefit of education, the primary goal of education is to transform an “empty mind into an open one.”⁹

Notice *the shift from banking to liberation* in the quote. The term “empty mind” implies the purpose of education is to fill the mind with facts, terms, procedures, and directions. But we are not robots whose function is to merely recall information and process orders! We are something else entirely. Just what will be explored throughout this course. An open mind is a liberated mind. The open mind searches for what is good and what is true for their own sakes, not because it will increase one’s bottom line.

Freire contrasts the Banking Model of Education with what can be called a “Liberation Model of Education.” This approach to education places an emphasis upon the humanization of the self and the Other. The goal for the student and the teacher to partner together to solve the problems that face their communities. Sometimes this will involve unmasking the machines that govern our lives but remain hidden from public view. Other times it will involve imagining a more just society or efficient contraption. It might even involve naming and reckoning with current systems of oppression as well as coming to terms with how injustices of the past echo forward. It always resists demonizing the Other and refuses to turn the tables, allowing the oppressed to become the vengeful oppressors, as is the temptation.

The Liberation Model of Education is able to simultaneously realize that in some ways we have been the *beneficiaries* of unjust social contracts, even though we have not been *signatories* to them. A Banking Model of Education is unable to evaluate the systems in which it is embedded because within it, all knowledge must be stable and that stability depends upon the legitimacy of the system. In contrast, in the Liberation Model of Education, we can question the systems themselves, demanding better and more just systems. We will talk about this connection between power, justice, and knowledge elsewhere in the course.

⁸ Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition*, 4 edition (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), chap. 2.

⁹ Quote by Malcom Forbes as recorded in: Richard Lederer, *A Tribute to Teachers: Wit and Wisdom, Information and Inspiration about Those Who Change Our Lives* (Marion Street Press, 2011), chap. 9.

And so we want to be mindful that we have likely enculturated the ethos and pathos of the Banking Model of education and we must endeavor to reject it in favor of the Liberation Model. We want to assume a posture of open questioning instead of rote memorization. This book is an archive of people wrestling with some of the most important, interesting, and timeless problems we've encountered. The Banking Model would have us stay static; the Liberation Model would have us grow and progress.

Philosophical Tourism

In our class and in this book, we do not pretend to make a systematic charting of the whole of the field of philosophy. That would take much longer than we have time or space for. We will be tourists instead of cartographers.

So, this is merely an introduction to philosophy by means of representative questions. There is so much history. There are so many questions, speculations, discoveries, and investigations that are missing here. At the end of each chapter, there is a list of readings if you want to take the next step into these lines of inquiry.

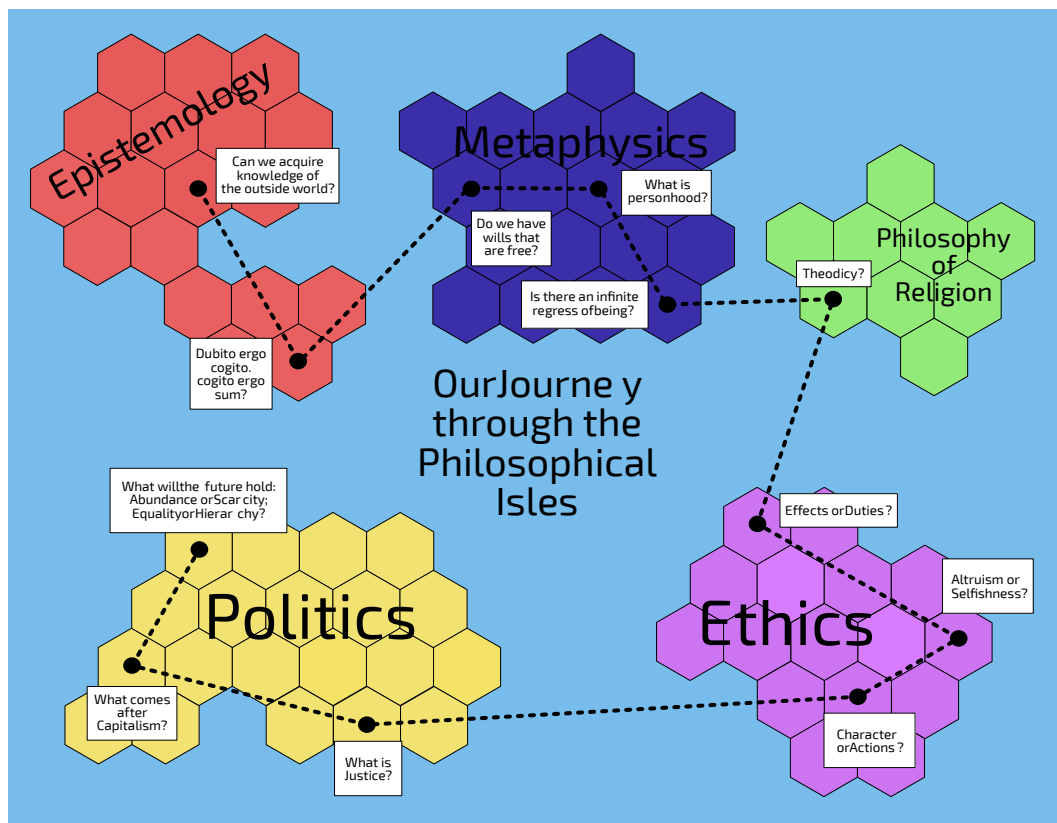


Figure 3: A map (of sorts) of some the questions we'll be visiting in this class. Notice all the places we won't have a chance to visit.

Good Philosophy is Dangerous

Karl Marx wrote

“[So far] the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.”¹⁰

The prospect of change can be scary, particularly if you are among the people who might lose power (in whatever form that may be) as a result of that change. After all, that which scares power the most is a public “No.” And so, we might have all manner of reasons and motivations to not ask the important questions, to not challenge systems that are unjust. Perhaps we are trained not to notice or ask certain questions. Perhaps any time we start to ask these questions, the answers seem too hard or too overwhelming.

But questions — and their — answers can change the course of societies... or get one killed. The most famous martyrdom of a philosopher was the execution of Socrates after being convicted by a jury¹¹ in Athens in 399 BCE. There were two charges leveled against him:

1. impiety (denying the gods of the State) and
2. corrupting the youth.¹²

Both Xenophon and Plato depict the trial, with Xenophon using the philosopher Hermogenes as a primary source and Plato writing from the point of view of one of Socrates’ students. In Plato’s version, Socrates defends himself against these charges and discusses the nature of wisdom and wisdom-in-society. Socrates had been named by the Oracle at Delphi to be the wisest of all Athenians. The problem was that Socrates thought himself foolish. However, the Oracle could never be wrong, so Socrates was at a loss of what to do. He decides the only thing he can do is prove the Oracle wrong by finding someone who was wiser than he. Through Socrates’ search for wisdom in Athens, he discovers that the leaders of Athenian society, those who thought themselves wise, were not.

¹⁰ Karl Marx, “Theses 11,” in *Theses of Feuerbach*, trans. Cyril Smith, n.d.

¹¹ This jury was known as a *dikasts* and was composed of Athenian male citizens that were chosen by lot.

¹² Xenophon, “Apology,” in *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), sec. 10, <http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0032.tlg005.perseus-eng1:Apol>.

In this quest, he gathered followers — often the children of those in charge of Athenian society — and made enemies throughout Athens. Finally, the leaders could take no more, charged Socrates with high crimes, and put him on trial.



Figure 4: The Death of Socrates by Jacques-Louis David.¹³

Ultimately, he was executed for questioning power, though this was framed as denying the gods of the polis¹⁴ and corrupting the youth. The leadership of Athens policed the questioning of power structures with deadly results. Their aim was to maintain the status quo through state-legitimized violence.¹⁵ For them, patriotism was obedience and a lack of questioning; for Socrates patriotism was questioning the structures and ideologies of the polis so that the polis may become more and more just.

This pattern has repeated itself several times in history. Attempts to question the ideals and structures of the polis are conflated with a hatred of the polis — especially when the outcomes of such inquiry would result in real change (instead of idle speculations).

¹³ Jacques Louis David, *The Death of Socrates*, 1787, Oil on Canvas, 129.5 x 196.2 cm, 1787, Gallery 614, The Met, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436105>.

¹⁴ This is the Greek term for the city-state. We will use it interchangeably with our modern notion of the nation-state and with the Greek notion of the city-state.

¹⁵ Policing the public transcript does not need to be done by the State nor have to use violence as the tool. It could be a corporation attempting to deny its workers the ability to protest, for instance. Or it could be a confessional religious institution firing faculty members for questioning articles in the statement of faith.

Questioning and change threaten the status quo and therefore power structures and therefore those in power. And those in power have a vested interest in short-circuiting critical inquiry, particularly critical inquiry into the nature and structure of society.

And so, in this class and in life, we want to be mindful of this tendency and to constantly be questioning ourselves, our societies, and our leaders with the goal of seeking realized goodness, truth, and justice in each.

Chapter 1: The Value of Philosophy

Question: In what way is philosophy relevant in today's world and in our lives?

Observation:

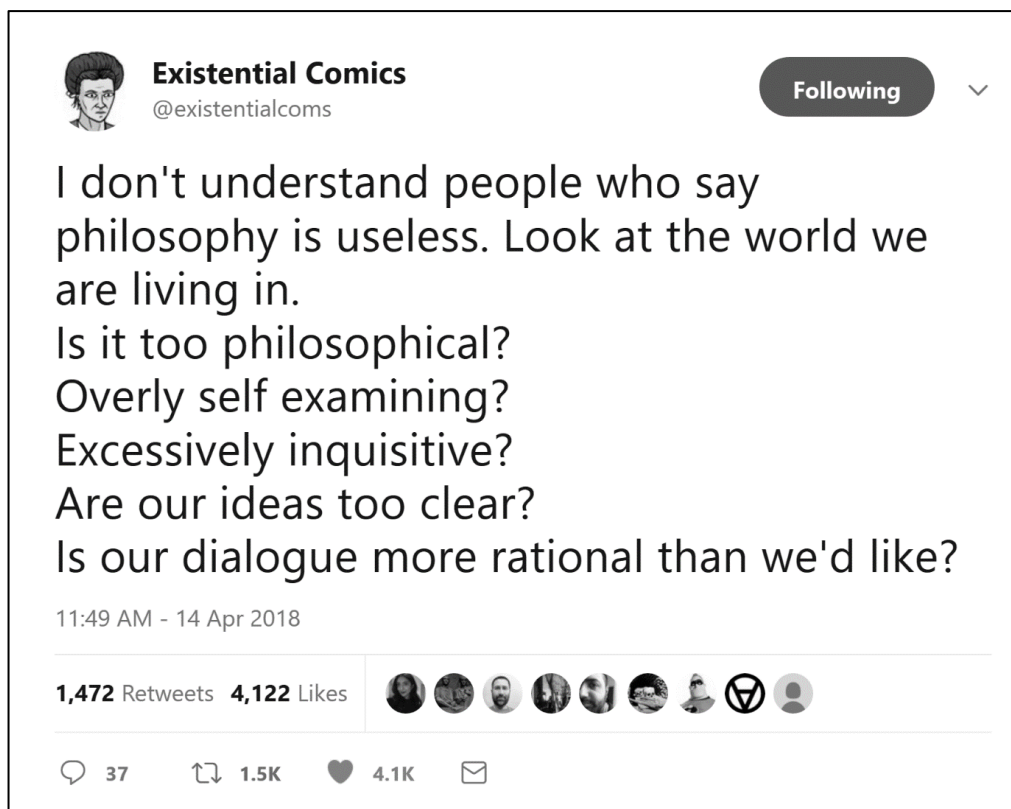


Figure 5: Tweet from @ExistentialComics on the value of philosophy in society.¹⁶

In the following readings, we will encounter arguments for carefully exploring philosophical issues and imperative of critical thinking.

¹⁶ @ExistentialComs, "Twitter Post," Tweet, Twitter Post, April 14, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/save/https://twitter.com/existentialcoms/status/985198277313282048>.

On the Allegory of the Cave – Plato

From Book VII of *The Republic* by Plato

Socrates: AND NOW, I SAID, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened:—Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

Glaucou: I see.

Socrates: And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

Glaucou: You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Socrates: Like ourselves and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

Glaucou: True how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

Socrates: And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Glaucou: Yes.

Socrates: And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Glaucou: Very true.

Socrates: And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other

side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passersby spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

Glaucou: No question.

Socrates: To them, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

Glaucou: That is certain.

Socrates: And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, what will be his reply?

And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Glaucou: Far truer.

Socrates: And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take and take in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

Glaucou: True.

Socrates: And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he's forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

Glaucou: Not all in a moment.

Socrates: He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he

will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

Glaucón: Certainly.

Socrates: Last of he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

Glaucón: Certainly.

Socrates: He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

Glaucón: Clearly he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

Socrates: And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

Glaucón: Certainly, he would.

Socrates: And if they were in the habit of conferring honors among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honors and glories, or envy the possessors of them? Would he not say with Homer,

Better to be the poor servant of a poor master,

And to endure anything, rather than think as they do and live after their manner?

Glaucón: Yes, I think that he would rather suffer anything than entertain these false notions and live in this miserable manner.

Socrates: Imagine once more, such an one coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation; would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

Glaucon: To be sure.

Socrates: And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous? Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.

Glaucon: No question.

Socrates: This entire allegory, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But, whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally, either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

Glaucon: I agree, as far as I am able to understand you.

Socrates: Moreover, you must not wonder that those who attain to this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell; which desire of theirs is very natural, if our allegory may be trusted.

Glaucon: Yes, very natural.

Socrates: And is there anything surprising in one who passes from divine contemplations to the evil state of man, misbehaving himself in a ridiculous manner; if, while his eyes are blinking and before he has become accustomed to the surrounding darkness, he is compelled to fight in courts of law, or in other places, about the images or the shadows of images of justice, and is endeavouring to meet the conceptions of those who have never yet seen absolute justice?

Glaucon: Anything but surprising, he replied.

Socrates: Anyone who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter light, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den.

Glaucon: That, is a very just distinction.

Socrates: But then, if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes.

Glaucon: They undoubtedly say this.

Socrates: Whereas, our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good.

Glaucon: Very true.

Socrates: And must there not be some art which will effect conversion in the easiest and quickest manner; not implanting the faculty of sight, for that exists already, but has been turned in the wrong direction, and is looking away from the truth?

Glaucon: Yes, such an art may be presumed.

Socrates: And whereas the other so-called virtues of the soul seem to be akin to bodily qualities, for even when they are not originally innate they can be implanted later by habit and exercise, the virtue of wisdom more than anything else contains a divine

element which always remains, and by this conversion is rendered useful and profitable; or, on the other hand, hurtful and useless. Did you never observe the narrow intelligence flashing from the keen eye of a clever rogue—how eager he is, how clearly his paltry soul sees the way to his end; he is the reverse of blind, but his keen eyesight is forced into the service of evil, and he is mischievous in proportion to his cleverness.

Glaucón: Very true.

Socrates: But what if there had been a circumcision of such natures in the days of their youth; and they had been severed from those sensual pleasures, such as eating and drinking, which, like leaden weights, were attached to them at their birth, and which drag them down and turn the vision of their souls upon the things that are below—if, I say, they had been released from these impediments and turned in the opposite direction, the very same faculty in them would have seen the truth as keenly as they see what their eyes are turned to now.

Glaucón: Very likely.

Socrates: Yes, and there is another thing which is likely. or rather a necessary inference from what has preceded, that neither the uneducated and uninformed of the truth, nor yet those who never make an end of their education, will be able ministers of State; not the former, because they have no single aim of duty which is the rule of all their actions, private as well as public; nor the latter, because they will not act at all except upon compulsion, fancying that they are already dwelling apart in the islands of the blest.

Glaucón: Very true.

Socrates: Then, the business of us who are the founders of the State will be to compel the best minds to attain that knowledge which we have already shown to be the greatest of all; they must continue to ascend until they arrive at the good; but when they have ascended and seen enough we must not allow them to do as they do now.

Glaucón: What do you mean?

Socrates: I mean that they remain in the upper world: but this must not be allowed; they must be made to descend again among the prisoners in the den, and partake of their labours and honors, whether they are worth having or not.

Glaucon: But is not this unjust? Ought we to give them a worse life, when they might have a better?

Socrates: You have again forgotten, my friend, the intention of the legislator, who did not aim at making any one class in the State happy above the rest; the happiness was to be in the whole State, and he held the citizens together by persuasion and necessity, making them benefactors of the State, and therefore benefactors of one another; to this end he created them, not to please themselves, but to be his instruments in binding up the State.

Citation and Use

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On the Value of Philosophy – Bertrand Russell

From *The Problems of Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell

We need to consider what is the value of philosophy and why it ought to be studied. It is the more necessary to consider this question, in view of the fact that many people, under the influence of science or of practical affairs, are inclined to doubt whether philosophy is anything better than innocent but useless trifling, hairsplitting distinctions, and controversies on matters concerning which knowledge is impossible.

This view of philosophy appears to result, partly from a wrong conception of the ends of life, partly from a wrong conception of the kind of goods which philosophy strives to achieve. Physical science, through the medium of inventions, is useful to innumerable people who are wholly ignorant of it; thus the study of physical science is to be

recommended, not only, or primarily, because of the effect on the student, but rather because of the effect on mankind in general. This utility does not belong to philosophy. If the study of philosophy has any value at all for others than students of philosophy, it must be only indirectly, through its effects upon the lives of those who study it. It is in these effects, therefore, if anywhere, that the value of philosophy must be primarily sought.

But further, if we are not to fail in our endeavor to determine the value of philosophy, we must first free our minds from the prejudices of what are wrongly called "practical" people. The "practical" person, as this word is often used, is one who recognises only material needs, who realizes that people must have food for the body, but is oblivious of the necessity of providing food for the mind. If all people were well off, if poverty and disease had been reduced to their lowest possible point, there would still remain much to be done to produce a valuable society; and even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body. It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can be persuaded that the study of philosophy is not a waste of time.

Philosophy, like all other studies, aims primarily at knowledge. The knowledge it aims it is the kind of knowledge which gives unity and system to the body of the sciences, and the kind which results from a critical examination of the grounds of our convictions, prejudices, and beliefs. But it cannot be maintained that philosophy has had any very great measure of success in its attempts to provide definite answers to its questions. If you ask a mathematician, a mineralogist, a historian, or any other person of learning, what definite body of truths has been ascertained by his science, his answer will last as long as you are willing to listen. But if you put the same question to a philosopher, he will, if he is candid, have to confess that his study has not achieved positive results such as have been achieved by other sciences. It is true that this is partly accounted for by the fact that, as soon as definite knowledge concerning any subject becomes possible, this subject ceases to be called philosophy, and becomes a separate science. The whole study of the heavens, which now belongs to astronomy, was once included in philosophy; Newton's great work was called "the mathematical principles of natural philosophy." Similarly, the study of the human mind, which was, until very lately, a part of philosophy, has now been separated from philosophy and has become the science of psychology. Thus, to a great extent, the uncertainty of philosophy is more apparent than real: those questions which are already capable of definite answers are placed in the sciences, while those only to which, at present, no definite answer can be given, remain to form the residue which is called philosophy.

This is, however, only a part of the truth concerning the uncertainty of philosophy. There are many questions—and among them those that are of the profoundest interest to our spiritual life—which, so far as we can see, must remain insoluble to the human intellect unless its powers become of quite a different order from what they are now. Has the universe any unity of plan or purpose, or is it a fortuitous concourse of atoms? Is consciousness a permanent part of the universe, giving hope of indefinite growth in wisdom, or is it a transitory accident on a small planet on which life must ultimately become impossible? Are good and evil of importance to the universe or only to humanity? Such questions are asked by philosophy, and variously answered by various philosophers. But it would seem that, whether answers be otherwise discoverable or not, the answers suggested by philosophy are none of them demonstrably true. Yet, however slight may be the hope of discovering an answer, it is part of the business of philosophy to continue the consideration of such questions, to make us aware of their importance, to examine all the approaches to them, and to keep alive that speculative interest in the universe which is apt to be killed by confining ourselves to definitely ascertainable knowledge.

Many philosophers, it is true, have held that philosophy could establish the truth of certain answers to such fundamental questions. They have supposed that what is of most importance in religious beliefs could be proved by strict demonstration to be true. In order to judge of such attempts, it is necessary to take a survey of human knowledge, and to form an opinion as to its methods and its limitations. On such a subject it would be unwise to pronounce dogmatically; but if the investigations of our previous chapters have not led us astray, we shall be compelled to renounce the hope of finding philosophical proofs of religious beliefs. We cannot, therefore, include as part of the value of philosophy any definite set of answers to such questions. Hence, once more, the value of philosophy must not depend upon any supposed body of definitely ascertainable knowledge to be acquired by those who study it.

The value of philosophy is, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty. The person who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the cooperation or consent of his deliberate reason. To such a person the world tends to become definite, finite, obvious; common objects rouse no questions, and unfamiliar possibilities are contemptuously rejected. As soon as we begin to philosophize, on the contrary, we find, as we saw in our opening chapters, that even the most everyday things lead to problems to which only very incomplete answers can be given. Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom. Thus, while

diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be; it removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never travelled into the region of liberating doubt, and it keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.

Apart from its utility in showing unsuspected possibilities, philosophy has a value—perhaps its chief value—through the greatness of the objects which it contemplates, and the freedom from narrow and personal aims resulting from this contemplation. The life of the instinctive person is shut up within the circle of his private interests: family and friends may be included, but the outer world is not regarded except as it may help or hinder what comes within the circle of instinctive wishes. In such a life there is something feverish and confined, in comparison with which the philosophic life is calm and free. The private world of instinctive interests is a small one, set in the midst of a great and powerful world which must, sooner or later, lay our private world in ruins. Unless we can so enlarge our interests as to include the whole outer world, we remain like a garrison in a beleaguered fortress, knowing that the enemy prevents escape and that ultimate surrender is inevitable. In such a life there is no peace, but a constant strife between the insistence of desire and the powerlessness of will. In one way or another, if our life is to be great and free, we must escape this prison and this strife.

One way of escape is by philosophic contemplation. Philosophic contemplation does not, in its widest survey, divide the universe into two hostile camps—friends and foes, helpful and hostile, good and bad—it views the whole impartially. Philosophic contemplation, when it is unalloyed, does not aim at proving that the rest of the universe is akin to humanity. All acquisition of knowledge is an enlargement of the Self, but this enlargement is best attained when it is not directly sought. It is obtained when the desire for knowledge is alone operative, by a study which does not wish in advance that its objects should have this or that character, but adapts the Self to the characters which it finds in its objects. This enlargement of Self is not obtained when, taking the Self as it is, we try to show that the world is so similar to this Self that knowledge of it is possible without any admission of what seems alien. The desire to prove this is a form of self-assertion, and like all self-assertion, it is an obstacle to the growth of Self which it desires, and of which the Self knows that it is capable. Self-assertion, in philosophic speculation as elsewhere, views the world as a means to its own ends; thus it makes the world of less account than Self, and the Self sets bounds to the greatness of its goods. In contemplation, on the contrary, we start from the not-Self, and through its greatness the boundaries of Self are enlarged; through the infinity of the universe the mind which contemplates it achieves some share in infinity.

For this reason greatness of soul is not fostered by those philosophies which assimilate the universe to Humanity. Knowledge is a form of union of Self and not-Self; like all union, it is impaired by dominion, and therefore by any attempt to force the universe into conformity with what we find in ourselves. There is a widespread philosophical tendency towards the view which tells us that humanity is the measure of all things, that truth is person-made, that space and time and the world of universals are properties of the mind, and that, if there be anything not created by the mind, it is unknowable and of no account for us. This view, if our previous discussions were correct, is untrue; but in addition to being untrue, it has the effect of robbing philosophic contemplation of all that gives it value, since it fetters contemplation to Self. What it calls knowledge is not a union with the not-Self, but a set of prejudices, habits, and desires, making an impenetrable veil between us and the world beyond. The person who finds pleasure in such a theory of knowledge is like the person who never leaves the domestic circle for fear his word might not be law.

The true philosophic contemplation, on the contrary, finds its satisfaction in every enlargement of the not-Self, in everything that magnifies the objects contemplated, and thereby the subject contemplating. Everything, in contemplation, that is personal or private, everything that depends upon habit, self-interest, or desire, distorts the object, and hence impairs the union which the intellect seeks. By thus making a barrier between subject and object, such personal and private things become a prison to the intellect. The free intellect will see as God might see, without a *here* and *now*, without hopes and fears, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, dispassionately, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledge—knowledge as impersonal, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for humanity to attain. Hence also the free intellect will value more the abstract and universal knowledge into which the accidents of private history do not enter, than the knowledge brought by the senses, and dependent, as such knowledge must be, upon an exclusive and personal point of view and a body whose sense-organs distort as much as they reveal.

The mind which has become accustomed to the freedom and impartiality of philosophic contemplation will preserve something of the same freedom and impartiality in the world of action and emotion. It will view its purposes and desires as parts of the whole, with the absence of insistence that results from seeing them as infinitesimal fragments in a world of which all the rest is unaffected by any one person's deeds. The impartiality which, in contemplation, is the unalloyed desire for truth, is the very same quality of mind which, in action, is justice, and in emotion is that universal love which can be given to all, and not only to those who are judged useful or admirable. Thus, contemplation enlarges not only the objects of our thoughts, but also the objects of our actions and our affections: it

makes us citizens of the universe, not only of one walled city at war with all the rest. In this citizenship of the universe consists humanity's true freedom, and his liberation from the thralldom of narrow hopes and fears.

Thus, to sum up our discussion of the value of philosophy: Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination, and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.

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On Socrates' Defence – Plato

From *The Apology* by Plato

Socrates Requests a Just Listening

How you, O Athenians, have been affected by my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was—so persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth. But of the many falsehoods told by them, there was one which quite amazed me;—I mean when they said that you should be upon your guard and not allow yourselves to be deceived by the force of my eloquence. To say this, when they were certain to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and proved myself to be anything but a great speaker, did indeed appear to me most shameless—unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth; for is such is their meaning, I admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have scarcely spoken the truth at all; but from me you shall hear the whole truth: not, however,

delivered after their manner in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. No, by heaven! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am confident in the justice of my cause (Or, I am certain that I am right in taking this course.): at my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator—let no one expect it of me. And I must beg of you to grant me a favor:—If I defend myself in my accustomed manner, and you hear me using the words which I have been in the habit of using in the agora, at the tables of the moneychangers, or anywhere else, I would ask you not to be surprised, and not to interrupt me on this account. For I am more than seventy years of age, and appearing now for the first time in a court of law, I am quite a stranger to the language of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, and after the fashion of his country:—Am I making an unfair request of you? Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the truth of my words, and give heed to that: let the speaker speak truly and the judge decide justly.

Charges of the Older Accusers

And first, I have to reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go on to the later ones. For of old I have had many accusers, who have accused me falsely to you during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are the others, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods, telling of one Socrates, a wise man, who speculated about the heaven above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. The disseminators of this tale are the accusers whom I dread; for their hearers are apt to fancy that such enquirers do not believe in the existence of the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they were made by them in the days when you were more impressible than you are now—in childhood, or it may have been in youth—and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And hardest of all, I do not know and cannot tell the names of my accusers; unless in the chance case of a Comic poet.

All who from envy and malice have persuaded you—some of them having first convinced themselves—all this class of men are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and cross-examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defense, and argue when there is no one who answers. I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds; one recent, the other ancient: and I hope that you will see the propriety of my answering the latter first, for

these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Well, then, I must make my defense, and endeavour to clear away in a short time, a slander which has lasted a long time. May I succeed, if to succeed be for my good and yours, or likely to avail me in my cause! The task is not an easy one; I quite understand the nature of it. And so leaving the event with God, in obedience to the law I will now make my defense.

Defence Against Older Accusations

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what is the accusation which has given rise to the slander of me, and in fact has encouraged Meletus to proof this charge against me. Well, what do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit: “Socrates is an evildoer, and a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.”

Such is the nature of the accusation: it is just what you have yourselves seen in the comedy of Aristophanes, who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he walks in air, and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little—not that I mean to speak disparagingly of any one who is a student of natural philosophy.

I should be very sorry if Meletus could bring so grave a charge against me. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with physical speculations. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbours whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon such matters. . . You hear their answer. And from what they say of this part of the charge you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money; this accusation has no more truth in it than the other. Although, if a man were really able to instruct mankind, to receive money for giving instruction would, in my opinion, be an honor to him. There is Gorgias of Leontium, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis, who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens by whom they might be taught for nothing, and come to them whom they not only pay, but are thankful if they may be allowed to pay them. There is at this time a Parian philosopher residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way:—I came across a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: “Callias,” I said, “if

your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in finding some one to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses, or a farmer probably, who would improve and perfect them in their own proper virtue and excellence; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there any one who understands human and political virtue? You must have thought about the matter, for you have sons; is there any one?" "There is," he said. "Who is he?" said I; "and of what country? and what does he charge?" "Evenus the Parian," he replied; "he is the man, and his charge is five minae." Happy is Evenus, I said to myself, if he really has this wisdom, and teaches at such a moderate charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

Delphic Oracle

I dare say, Athenians, that some one among you will reply, "Yes, Socrates, but what is the origin of these accusations which are brought against you; there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All these rumours and this talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, what is the cause of them, for we should be sorry to judge hastily of you." Now I regard this as a fair challenge, and I will endeavour to explain to you the reason why I am called wise and have such an evil fame. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think that I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, wisdom such as may perhaps be attained by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise; whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit; that witness shall be the God of Delphi—he will tell you about my wisdom, if I have any, and of what sort it is. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the recent exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether—as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt—he asked the oracle to tell him whether anyone was wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered, that there was no man wiser. Chaerephon is dead himself; but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of what I am saying.

Socrates Cross-examines Others

Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of his riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god, and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After long consideration, I thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, "Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest." Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and still wiser by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So, I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good, I am better off than he is, — for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to have slightly the advantage of him. Then I went to another who had still higher pretensions to wisdom, and my conclusion was exactly the same. Whereupon I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him. Then I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me, —the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog I swear! —for I must tell you the truth—the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that others less esteemed were really wiser and better. I will tell you the tale of my wanderings and of the "Herculean" labors, as I may call them, which I endured only to find at last the oracle irrefutable. After the politicians, I went to the poets; tragic, dithyrambic, and all sorts. And there, I said to myself, you will be instantly detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them—thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to confess the truth, but I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. Then I knew that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them. The poets appeared to me to be much in the same case; and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise.

So, I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

At last I went to the artisans. I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets;—because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom; and therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was.

Why Socrates is Wise

This inquisition has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies. And I am called wise, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, O men of Athens, that God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go about the world, obedient to the god, and search and make enquiry into the wisdom of any one, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and my occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

Prejudice Against Socrates

There is another thing:—young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and proceed to examine others; there are plenty of persons, as they quickly discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing; and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth!— and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practice or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the readymade charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in

the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretense of knowledge has been detected— which is the truth; and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are drawn up in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, have set upon me; Meletus, who has a quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen and politicians; Lycon, on behalf of the rhetoricians: and as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of such a mass of calumny all in a moment. And this, O men of Athens, is the truth and the whole truth; I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet, I know that my plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth? —Hence has arisen the prejudice against me; and this is the reason of it, as you will find out either in this or in any future enquiry.

Defence Against Corruption of the Youth

Editor's Note: For this part of the Apology, we have added in who is speaking at any particular point as Socrates asks questions and others answer.

Socrates: I have said enough in my defense against the first class of my accusers; I turn to the second class. They are headed by Meletus, that good man and true lover of his country, as he calls himself. Against these, too, I must try to make a defense: —Let their affidavit be read: it contains something of this kind: It says that Socrates is a doer of evil, who corrupts the youth; and who does not believe in the gods of the state, but has other new divinities of his own. Such is the charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. He says that I am a doer of evil, and corrupt the youth; but I say, O men of Athens, that Meletus is a doer of evil, in that he pretends to be in earnest when he is only in jest, and is so eager to bring men to trial from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavor to prove to you. Come hither, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you. You think a great deal about the improvement of youth?

Meletus: Yes, I do.

Socrates: Tell the judges, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the judges who their improver is—observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and

tell us who their improver is.

Meletus: The laws.

Socrates: But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws.

Meletus: The judges, Socrates, who are present in court.

Socrates: What, do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and improve youth?

Meletus: Certainly, they are.

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

Meletus: All of them.

Socrates: By the goddess Here, that is good news! There are plenty of improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience—do they improve them?

Meletus: Yes, they do.

And the senators?

Meletus: Yes, the senators improve them.

Socrates: But perhaps the members of the assembly corrupt them? —or do they too improve them?

Meletus: They improve them.

Socrates: Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is that what you affirm?

Meletus: That is what I stoutly affirm.

Socrates: I am very unfortunate if you are right. But suppose I ask you a question: How about horses? Does one man do them harm and all the world good? Is not the exact opposite the truth? One man is able to do them good, or at least not many; —the trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others who have to do with them rather

injure them? Is not that true, Meletus, of horses, or of any other animals? Most assuredly it is; whether you and Anytus say yes or no. Happy indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers. But you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is seen in your not caring about the very things which you bring against me.

And now, Meletus, I will ask you another question—by Zeus I will: Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; the question is one which may be easily answered. Do not the good do their neighbors good, and the bad do them evil?

Meletus: Certainly.

Socrates: And is there anyone who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend, the law requires you to answer—does any one like to be injured?

Meletus: Certainly not.

Socrates: And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Meletus: Intentionally, I say.

Socrates: But you have just admitted that the good do their neighbors good, and the evil do them evil. Now, is that a truth which your superior wisdom has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him; and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too—so you say, although neither I nor any other human being is ever likely to be convinced by you. But either I do not corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally; and on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law has no cognizance of unintentional offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally—no doubt I should; but you would have nothing to say to me and refused to teach me. And now you bring me up in this court, which is a place not of instruction, but of punishment.

Defence Against Atheism

Editor's Note: For this part of the Apology, we have added in who is speaking at any particular point as Socrates asks questions and others answer.

Socrates: It will be very clear to you, Athenians, as I was saying, that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies in their stead. These are the lessons by which I corrupt the youth, as you say.

Meletus: Yes, that I say emphatically.

Socrates: Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! for I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach other men to acknowledge some gods, and therefore that I do believe in gods, and am not an entire atheist— this you do not lay to my charge,—but only you say that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes—the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

Meletus: I mean the latter—that you are a complete atheist.

Socrates: What an extraordinary statement! Why do you think so, Meletus? Do you mean that I do not believe in the godhead of the sun or moon, like other men?

Meletus: I assure you, judges, that he does not: for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.

Socrates: Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras: and you have but a bad opinion of the judges, if you fancy them illiterate to such a degree as not to know that these doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras the Clazomenian, which are full of them. And so, forsooth, the youth are said to be taught them by Socrates, when there are not unfrequently exhibitions of them at the theatre (Probably in allusion to Aristophanes who caricatured, and to Euripides who borrowed the notions of Anaxagoras, as well as to other dramatic poets.) (price of admission one drachma at the most); and they might pay their money, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father these extraordinary views. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

Meletus: I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

Socrates: Nobody will believe you, Meletus, and I am pretty sure that you do not believe

yourself. I cannot help thinking, men of Athens, that Meletus is reckless and impudent, and that he has written this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. Has he not compounded a riddle, thinking to try me? He said to himself: —I shall see whether the wise Socrates will discover my facetious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them. For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them—but this is not like a person who is in earnest.

I should like you, O men of Athens, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his inconsistency; and do you, Meletus, answer. And I must remind the audience of my request that they would not make a disturbance if I speak in my accustomed manner: Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings? . . . I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not be always trying to get up an interruption. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in flute playing, and not in fluteplayers? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please to answer the next question: Can a man believe in spiritual and divine agencies, and not in spirits or demigods?

Meletus: He cannot.

Socrates: How lucky I am to have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court! But then you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in divine or spiritual agencies (new or old, no matter for that); at any rate, I believe in spiritual agencies, —so you say and swear in the affidavit; and yet if I believe in divine beings, how can I help believing in spirits or demigods; —must I not? To be sure I must; and therefore, I may assume that your silence gives consent. Now what are spirits or demigods? Are they not either gods or the sons of gods?

Meletus: Certainly, they are.

Socrates: But this is what I call the facetious riddle invented by you: the demigods or spirits are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in demigods. For if the demigods are the illegitimate sons of gods, whether by the nymphs or by any other mothers, of whom they are said to be the sons—what human being will ever believe that there are no gods if they are the sons of gods? You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been intended by you to make trial of me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real of which to

accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same men can believe in divine and superhuman things, and yet not believe that there are gods and demigods and heroes.

Socrates: I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defense is unnecessary, but I know only too well how many are the enmities which I have incurred, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed;— not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more; there is no danger of my being the last of them.

Do What's Right, Regardless

Someone will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong—acting the part of a good man or of a bad. Whereas, upon your view, the heroes who fell at Troy were not good for much, and the son of Thetis above all, who altogether despised danger in comparison with disgrace; and when he was so eager to slay Hector, his goddess mother said to him, that if he avenged his companion Patroclus, and slew Hector, he would die himself—“Fate,” she said, in these or the like words, “waits for you next after Hector;” he, receiving this warning, utterly despised danger and death, and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live in dishonor, and not to avenge his friend. “Let me die forthwith,” he replies, “and be avenged of my enemy, rather than abide here by the beaked ships, a laughingstock and a burden of the earth.” Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man's place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying. Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death—if now, when, as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death, fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For the fear of death is indeed the pretense of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being a pretense of knowing the unknown; and no one knows whether death, which men in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not

be the greatest good. Is not this ignorance of a disgraceful sort, the ignorance which is the conceit that a man knows what he does not know? And in this respect only I believe myself to differ from between us that you should hear me to the end: I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I believe that to hear me will be good for you, and therefore I beg that you will not cry out. I would have you know, that if you kill such a one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Nothing will injure me, not Meletus nor yet Anytus—they cannot, for a bad man is not permitted to injure a better than himself. I do not deny that Anytus may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is inflicting a great injury upon him: but there I do not agree. For the evil of doing as he is doing—the evil of unjustly taking away the life of another—is greater far.

Socrates, a Gadfly

And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God by condemning me, who am his gift to you. For if you kill me you will not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by God; and the state is a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing, and persuading and reproaching you. You will not easily find another like me, and therefore I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel out of temper (like a person who is suddenly awakened from sleep), and you think that you might easily strike me dead as Anytus advises, and then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless God in his care of you sent you another gadfly. When I say that I am given to you by God, the proof of my mission is this: —if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue; such conduct, I say, would be unlike human nature. If I had gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in my doing so; but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say that I have ever exacted or sought pay of any one; of that they have no witness. And I have a sufficient witness to the truth of what I say—my poverty.

Socrates' Divine Sign

Someone may wonder why I go about in private giving advice and busying myself with the

concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you why. You have heard me speak at sundry times and in divers places of an oracle or sign which comes to me, and is the divinity which Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do. This is what deters me from being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is, that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly striving against the many lawless and unrighteous deeds which are done in a state, will save his life; he who will fight for the right, if he would live even for a brief space, must have a private station and not a public one.

Doing What's Right, Regardless of Threat

I can give you convincing evidence of what I say, not words only, but what you value far more—actions. Let me relate to you a passage of my own life which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that “as I should have refused to yield” I must have died at once. I will tell you a tale of the courts, not very interesting perhaps, but nevertheless true. The only office of state which I ever held, O men of Athens, was that of senator: the tribe Antiochis, which is my tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginusae; and you proposed to try them in a body, contrary to law, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytanes who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and you called and shouted, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death. This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power, they sent for me and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis, as they wanted to put him to death. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in word only but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my great and only care was lest I should do an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end. And many will witness to my words. Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I had

led a public life, supposing that like a good man I had always maintained the right and had made justice, as I ought, the first thing? No indeed, men of Athens, neither I nor any other man. But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are slanderously termed my disciples, or to any other. Not that I have any regular disciples. But if any one likes to come and hear me while I am pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he is not excluded. Nor do I converse only with those who pay; but any one, whether he be rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my words; and whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, neither result can be justly imputed to me; for I never taught or professed to teach him anything. And if any one says that he has ever learned or heard anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, let me tell you that he is lying.

But I shall be asked, Why do people delight in continually conversing with to his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at me on this account. Now if there be such a person among you,—mind, I do not say that there is,—to him I may fairly reply: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not “of wood or stone,” as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons, O Athenians, three in number, one almost a man, and two others who are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? Not from any self-assertion or want of respect for you. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But, having regard to public opinion, I feel that such conduct would be discreditable to myself, and to you, and to the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, ought not to demean himself. Whether this opinion of me be deserved or not, at any rate the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among you who are said to be superior in wisdom and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; and I think that such are a dishonor to the state, and that any stranger coming in would have said of them that the most eminent men of Athens, to whom the Athenians themselves give honor and command, are no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those of us who have a reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are far more disposed to condemn the man who gets up a doleful scene and makes the city ridiculous, than him who holds his peace.

The Defence Concluded

But, setting aside the question of public opinion, there seems to be something wrong in asking a favor of a judge, and thus procuring an acquittal, instead of informing and convincing him. For his duty is, not to make a present of justice, but to give judgment; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws, and not according to his own good pleasure; and we ought not to encourage you, nor should you allow yourselves to be encouraged, in this habit of perjury—there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonorable and impious and wrong, especially now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if, O men of Athens, by force of persuasion and entreaty I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and in defending should simply convict myself of the charge of not believing in them. But that is not so—far otherwise. For I do believe that there are gods, and in a sense higher than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best for you and me.

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Chapter 2: Epistemology

Question: How do we know what we can know?

Epistemology comes from the Greek words *episte* (knowledge) and the suffix *logia* (reason, study, rationality), and so epistemology is the study of knowledge. Major questions that we ask at the onset of the study of epistemology are as follows.

- What is the nature of knowledge?
- How do we acquire knowledge?
- How do we verify knowledge claims?
- How do we assemble collections of isolated facts into meaningful knowledge or understanding?
- Can we ever know if our ideas about things-in-themselves correspond with things-in-themselves?

In this chapter we will begin to study some of these questions. In doing so, we pose problems, look at how philosophers have addressed those problems (and introduced further ones), and discuss other possible solutions.

On Appearance and Reality – Bertrand Russell

From *The Problems of Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell

Is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable person could doubt it? This question, which at first sight might not seem difficult, is really one of the most difficult that can be asked. When we have realized the obstacles in the way of a straightforward and confident answer, we shall be well launched on the study of philosophy—for philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences, but critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas.

In daily life, we assume as certain many things which, on a closer scrutiny, are found to be so full of apparent contradictions that only a great amount of thought enables us to know what it is that we really may believe. In the search for certainty, it is natural to begin with our present experiences, and in some sense, no doubt, knowledge is to be derived from them. But any statement as to what it is that our immediate experiences make us know is very likely to be wrong. It seems to me that I am now sitting in a chair, at a table of a certain shape, on which I see sheets of paper with writing or print. By turning my head, I see out of the window buildings and clouds and the sun. I believe that the sun is about ninety-three million miles from the earth; that it is a hot globe many times bigger than the earth; that, owing to the earth's rotation, it rises every morning, and will continue to do so for an indefinite time in the future. I believe that, if any other normal person comes into my room, he will see the same chairs and tables and books and papers as I see, and that the table which I see is the same as the table which I feel pressing against my arm. All this seems to be so evident as to be hardly worth stating, except in answer to a person who doubts whether I know anything. Yet all this may be reasonably doubted, and all of it requires much careful discussion before we can be sure that we have stated it in a form that is wholly true.

To make our difficulties plain, let us concentrate attention on the table. To the eye it is oblong, brown and shiny, to the touch it is smooth and cool and hard; when I tap it, it gives out a wooden sound. Anyone else who sees and feels and hears the table will agree with this description, so that it might seem as if no difficulty would arise; but as soon as we try to be more precise our troubles begin. Although I believe that the table is "really" of the same color all over, the parts that reflect the light look much brighter than the other parts, and some parts look white because of reflected light. I know that, if I move, the parts that reflect the light will be different, so that the apparent distribution of colors on the table will change. It follows that if several people are looking at the table at the same moment, no two of them will see exactly the same distribution of colors, because no two can see it from exactly the same point of view, and any change in the point of view makes some change in the way the light is reflected.

For most practical purposes these differences are unimportant, but to the painter they are all-important: the painter has to unlearn the habit of thinking that things seem to have the color which common sense says they "really" have, and to learn the habit of seeing things as they appear. Here we have already the beginning of one of the distinctions that cause most trouble in philosophy—the distinction between "appearance" and "reality," between what things seem to be and what they are. The painter wants to know what things seem to be, the practical person and the philosopher want to know what they are; but the philosopher's wish to know this is stronger than the practical person's, and is

more troubled by knowledge as to the difficulties of answering the question.

To return to the table. It is evident from what we have found, that there is no color which preeminently appears to be *the* color of the table, or even of any one particular part of the table—it appears to be of different colors from different points of view, and there is no reason for regarding some of these as more really its color than others. And we know that even from a given point of view the color will seem different by artificial light, or to a colorblind person, or to a person wearing blue spectacles, while in the dark there will be no color at all, though to touch and hearing the table will be unchanged. Thus, color is not something which is inherent in the table, but something depending upon the table and the spectator and the way the light falls on the table. When, in ordinary life, we speak of *the* color of the table, we only mean the sort of color which it will seem to have to a normal spectator from an ordinary point of view under usual conditions of light. But the other colors which appear under other conditions have just as good a right to be considered real; and therefore, to avoid favoritism, we are compelled to deny that, in itself, the table has any one particular color.

The same thing applies to the texture. With the naked eye one can see the grain, but otherwise the table looks smooth and even. If we look at it through a microscope, we should see roughnesses and hills and valleys, and all sorts of differences that are imperceptible to the naked eye. Which of these is the "real" table? We are naturally tempted to say that what we see through the microscope is more real, but that in turn would be changed by a still more powerful microscope. If, then, we cannot trust what we see with the naked eye, why should we trust what we see through a microscope? Thus, again, the confidence in our senses with which we began deserts us.

The *shape* of the table is no better. We are all in the habit of judging as to the "real" shapes of things, and we do this so unreflectingly that we come to think we actually see the real shapes. But, in fact, as we all have to learn if we try to draw, a given thing looks different in shape from every different point of view. If our table is "really" rectangular, it will look, from almost all points of view, as if it had two acute angles and two obtuse angles. If opposite sides are parallel, they will look as if they converged to a point away from the spectator; if they are of equal length, they will look as if the nearer side were longer. All these things are not commonly noticed in looking at a table, because experience has taught us to construct the "real" shape from the apparent shape, and the "real" shape is what interests us as practical people. But the "real" shape is not what we see; it is something inferred from what we see. And what we see is constantly changing in shape as we move about the room; so that here again the senses seem not to give us the truth about the table itself, but only about the appearance of the table.

Similar difficulties arise when we consider the sense of touch. It is true that the table always gives us a sensation of hardness, and we feel that it resists pressure. But the sensation we obtain depends upon how hard we press the table and also upon what part of the body we press with; thus, the various sensations due to various pressures or various parts of the body cannot be supposed to reveal *directly* any definite property of the table, but at most to be *signs* of some property which perhaps *causes* all the sensations, but is not actually apparent in any of them. And the same applies still more obviously to the sounds which can be elicited by rapping the table.

Thus, it becomes evident that the real table, if there is one, is not the same as what we immediately experience by sight or touch or hearing. The real table, if there is one, is not *immediately* known to us at all, but must be an inference from what is immediately known. Hence, two very difficult questions at once arise; namely, (1) Is there a real table at all? (2) If so, what sort of object can it be?

It will help us in considering these questions to have a few simple terms of which the meaning is definite and clear. Let us give the name of "sense data" to the things that are immediately known in sensation: such things as colors, sounds, smells, hardnesses, roughnesses, and so on. We shall give the name "sensation" to the experience of being immediately aware of these things. Thus, whenever we see a color, we have a sensation *of* the color, but the color itself is a sense datum, not a sensation. The color is that *of* which we are immediately aware, and the awareness itself is the sensation. It is plain that if we are to know anything about the table, it must be by means of the sense data—brown color, oblong shape, smoothness, etc.—which we associate with the table; but for the reasons which have been given, we cannot say that the table *is* the sense data, or even that the sense data are directly properties of the table. Thus, a problem arises as to the relation of the sense data to the real table, supposing there is such a thing.

The real table, if it exists, we will call a "physical object." Thus, we have to consider the relation of sense data to physical objects. The collection of all physical objects is called "matter." Thus, our two questions may be restated as follows:

- (1) Is there any such thing as matter?
- (2) If so, what is its nature?

The philosopher who first brought prominently forward the reasons for regarding the immediate objects of our senses as not existing independently of us was Bishop Berkeley (1685–1753). His *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous, in Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*, undertake to prove that there is no such thing as matter at all, and that the world consists of nothing but minds and their ideas. Hylas has hitherto believed in

matter, but he is no match for Philonous, who mercilessly drives him into contradictions and paradoxes, and makes his own denial of matter seem, in the end, as if it were almost common sense. The arguments employed are of very different value: some are important and sound, others are confused or quibbling. But Berkeley retains the merit of having shown that the existence of matter is capable of being denied without absurdity, and that if there are any things that exist independently of us they cannot be the immediate objects of our sensations.

There are two different questions involved when we ask whether matter exists, and it is important to keep them clear. We commonly mean by "matter" something which is opposed to "mind," something which we think of as occupying space and as radically incapable of any sort of thought or consciousness. It is chiefly in this sense that Berkeley denies matter; that is to say, he does not deny that the sense data which we commonly take as signs of the existence of the table are really signs of the existence of *something* independent of us, but he does deny that this something is nonmental, that it is neither mind nor ideas entertained by some mind. He admits that there must be something which continues to exist when we go out of the room or shut our eyes, and that what we call seeing the table does really give us reason for believing in something which persists even when we are not seeing it. But he thinks that this something cannot be radically different in nature from what we see, and cannot be independent of seeing altogether, though it must be independent of *our* seeing. He is thus led to regard the "real" table as an idea in the mind of God. Such an idea has the required permanence and independence of ourselves, without being—as matter would otherwise be—something quite unknowable, in the sense that we can only infer it, and can never be directly and immediately aware of it.

Other philosophers since Berkeley have also held that, although the table does not depend for its existence upon being seen by me, it does depend upon being seen (or otherwise apprehended in sensation) by *some* mind—not necessarily the mind of God, but more often the whole collective mind of the universe. This they hold, as Berkeley does, chiefly because they think there can be nothing real—or at any rate nothing known to be real—except minds and their thoughts and feelings. We might state the argument by which they support their view in some such way as this: "Whatever can be thought of is an idea in the mind of the person thinking of it; therefore, nothing can be thought of except ideas in minds; therefore, anything else is inconceivable, and what is inconceivable cannot exist."

Such an argument, in my opinion, is fallacious; and of course, those who advance it do not put it so shortly or so crudely. But whether valid or not, the argument has been very

widely advanced in one form or another; and very many philosophers, perhaps a majority, have held that there is nothing real except minds and their ideas. Such philosophers are called "idealists." When they come to explaining matter, they either say, like Berkeley, that matter is really nothing but a collection of ideas, or they say, like **Leibniz (1646–1716)**, that what appears as matter is really a collection of more or less rudimentary minds.

But these philosophers, though they deny matter as opposed to mind, nevertheless, in another sense, admit matter. It will be remembered that we asked two questions; namely,

- (1) Is there a real table at all?
- (2) If so, what sort of object can it be?

Now both Berkeley and Leibniz admit that there is a real table, but Berkeley says it is certain ideas in the mind of God, and Leibniz says it is a colony of souls. Thus, both of them answer our first question in the affirmative, and only diverge from the views of ordinary mortals in their answer to our second question. In fact, almost all philosophers seem to be agreed that there is a real table: they almost all agree that, however much our sense data—color, shape, smoothness, etc.—may depend upon us, yet their occurrence is a sign of something existing independently of us, something differing, perhaps, completely from our sense data, and yet to be regarded as causing those sense data whenever we are in a suitable relation to the real table.

Now obviously this point in which the philosophers are agreed—the view that there *is* a real table, whatever its nature may be—is vitally important, and it will be worthwhile to consider what reasons there are for accepting this view before we go on to the further question as to the nature of the real table. Our next chapter, therefore, will be concerned with the reasons for supposing that there is a real table at all.

Before we go farther it will be well to consider for a moment what it is that we have discovered so far. It has appeared that, if we take any common object of the sort that is supposed to be known by the senses, what the senses *immediately* tell us is not the truth about the object as it is apart from us, but only the truth about certain sense data which, so far as we can see, depend upon the relations between us and the object. Thus, what we directly see, and feel is merely "appearance," which we believe to be a sign of some "reality" behind. But if the reality is not what appears, have we any means of knowing whether there is any reality at all? And if so, have we any means of finding out what it is like?

Such questions are bewildering, and it is difficult to know that even the strangest

hypotheses may not be true. Thus, our familiar table, which has roused but the slightest thoughts in us hitherto, has become a problem full of surprising possibilities. The one thing we know about it is that it is not what it seems. Beyond this modest result, so far, we have the most complete liberty of conjecture. Leibniz tells us it is a community of souls; Berkeley tells us it is an idea in the mind of God; sober science, scarcely less wonderful, tells us it is a vast collection of electric charges in violent motion.

Among these surprising possibilities, doubt suggests that perhaps there is no table at all. Philosophy, if it cannot *answer* so many questions as we could wish, has at least the power of *asking* questions which increase the interest of the world, and show the strangeness and wonder lying just below the surface even in the commonest things of daily life.

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On Rationalism – René Descartes

From *The Meditations* by René Descartes

First Meditation: On What Can Be Called into Doubt

Some years ago, I was struck by how many false things I had believed, and by how doubtful was the structure of beliefs that I had based on them. I realized that if I wanted to establish anything in the sciences that was stable and likely to last, I needed – just once in my life – to demolish everything completely and start again from the foundations. It looked like an enormous task, and I decided to wait until I was old enough to be sure that there was nothing to be gained from putting it off any longer. I have now delayed it for so long that I have no excuse for going on planning to do it rather than getting to work. So today I have set all my worries aside and arranged for myself a clear stretch of free time. I am here quite alone, and at last I will devote myself, sincerely and without holding back, to demolishing my opinions.

I can do this without showing that all my beliefs are false, which is probably more than I could ever manage. My reason tells me that as well as withholding assent from propositions that are obviously false, I should also withhold it from ones that are not completely certain and indubitable. So, all I need, for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, is to find in each of them at least some reason for doubt. I can do this without going through them one by one, which would take forever: once the foundations of a building have been undermined, the rest collapses of its own accord; so, I will go straight for the basic principles on which all my former beliefs rested.

Whatever I have accepted until now as most true has come to me through my senses. But occasionally I have found that they have deceived me, and it is unwise to trust completely those who have deceived us even once.

Yet although the senses sometimes deceive us about objects that are very small or distant, that doesn't apply to my belief that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands, and so on. It seems to be quite impossible to doubt beliefs like these, which come from the senses.

Another example: how can I doubt that these hands or this whole body are mine? To doubt such things, I would have to liken myself to brain-damaged madmen who are convinced they are kings when really they are paupers, or say they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. Such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I modelled myself on them.

What a brilliant piece of reasoning! As if I were not a man who sleeps at night and often has all the same experiences while asleep as madmen do when awake – indeed sometimes even more improbable ones. Often in my dreams I am convinced of just such familiar events – that I am sitting by the fire in my dressing-gown – when in fact I am lying undressed in bed! Yet right now my eyes are certainly wide open when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it isn't asleep; when I rub one hand against the other, I do it deliberately and know what I am doing. This wouldn't all happen with such clarity to someone asleep.

Indeed! As if I didn't remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep! As I think about this more carefully, I realize that there is never any reliable way of distinguishing being awake from being asleep.

This discovery makes me feel dizzy, which itself reinforces the notion that I may be asleep! Suppose then that I am dreaming – it isn't true that I, with my eyes open, am moving my head and stretching out my hands. Suppose, indeed that I don't even have

hands or anybody at all.

Still, it has to be admitted that the visions that come in sleep are like paintings: they must have been made as copies of real things; so at least these general kinds of things – eyes, head, hands and the body as a whole – must be real and not imaginary. For even when painters try to depict sirens and satyrs with the most extraordinary bodies, they simply jumble up the limbs of different kinds of real animals, rather than inventing natures that are entirely new. If they do succeed in thinking up something completely fictitious and unreal – not remotely like anything ever seen before – at least the colors used in the picture must be real. Similarly, although these general kinds of things – eyes, head, hands and so on – could be imaginary, there is no denying that certain even simpler and more universal kinds of things are real. These are the elements out of which we make all our mental images of things – the true and also the false ones.

These simpler and more universal kinds include body, and extension; the shape of extended things; their quantity, size and number; the places things can be in, the time through which they can last, and so on.

So, it seems reasonable to conclude that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all other sciences dealing with things that have complex structures are doubtful; while arithmetic, geometry and other studies of the simplest and most general things – whether they really exist in nature or not – contain something certain and indubitable. For whether I am awake or asleep, two plus three makes five, and a square has only four sides. It seems impossible to suspect that such obvious truths might be false.

However, I have for many years been sure that there is an all-powerful God who made me to be the sort of creature that I am. How do I know that he hasn't brought it about that there is no earth, no sky, nothing that takes up space, no shape, no size, no place, while making sure that all these things appear to me to exist? Anyway, I sometimes think that others go wrong even when they think they have the most perfect knowledge; so how do I know that I myself don't go wrong every time I add two and three or count the sides of a square? Well, you might say, God would not let me be deceived like that, because he is said to be supremely good. But, I reply, if God's goodness would stop him from letting me be deceived all the time, you would expect it to stop him from allowing me to be deceived even occasionally; yet clearly, I sometimes am deceived.

Some people would deny the existence of such a powerful God rather than believe that everything else is uncertain. Let us grant them – for purposes of argument – that there is no God, and theology is fiction. On their view, then, I am a product of fate or chance or a long chain of causes and effects. But the less powerful they make my original cause, the

more likely it is that I am so imperfect as to be deceived all the time – because deception and error seem to be imperfections. Having no answer to these arguments, I am driven back to the position that doubts can properly be raised about any of my former beliefs. I don't reach this conclusion in a flippant or casual manner, but on the basis of powerful and well-thought-out reasons. So, in future, if I want to discover any certainty, I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs just as carefully as I withhold it from obvious falsehoods.

It isn't enough merely to have noticed this, though; I must make an effort to remember it. My old familiar opinions keep coming back, and against my will they capture my belief. It is as though they had a right to a place in my belief system as a result of long occupation and the law of custom. It is true that these habitual opinions of mine are highly probable; although they are in a sense doubtful, as I have shown, it is more reasonable to believe than to deny them. But if I go on viewing them in that light I shall never get out of the habit of confidently assenting to them. To conquer that habit, therefore, I had better switch right around and pretend (for a while) that these former opinions of mine are utterly false and imaginary. I shall do this until I have something to counterbalance the weight of old opinion, and the distorting influence of habit no longer prevents me from judging correctly. However far I go in my distrustful attitude, no actual harm will come of it, because my project won't affect how I act, but only how I go about acquiring knowledge.

So, I shall suppose that some malicious, powerful, cunning demon has done all he can to deceive me – rather than this being done by God, who is supremely good and the source of truth. I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, shapes, sounds and all external things are merely dreams that the demon has contrived as traps for my judgment. I shall consider myself as having no hands or eyes, or flesh, or blood or senses, but as having falsely believed that I had all these things. I shall stubbornly persist in this train of thought; and even if I can't learn any truth, I shall at least do what I can do, which is to be on my guard against accepting any falsehoods, so that the deceiver – however powerful and cunning he may be – will be unable to affect me in the slightest. This will be hard work, though, and a kind of laziness pulls me back into my old ways.

Like a prisoner who dreams that he is free, starts to suspect that it is merely a dream, and wants to go on dreaming rather than waking up, so I am content to slide back into my old opinions; I fear being shaken out of them because I am afraid that my peaceful sleep may be followed by hard labor when I wake, and that I shall have to struggle not in the light but in the imprisoning darkness of the problems I have raised.

Second Meditation: The nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body

Yesterday's meditation raised doubts – ones that are too serious to be ignored – which I can see no way of resolving. I feel like someone who is suddenly dropped into a deep whirlpool that tumbles him around so that he can neither stand on the bottom nor swim to the top. However, I shall force my way up, and try once more to carry out the project that I started on yesterday. I will set aside anything that admits of the slightest doubt, treating it as though I had found it to be outright false; and I will carry on like that until I find something certain, or – at worst – until I become certain that there is no certainty. Archimedes said that if he had one firm and immovable point he could lift the world with a long enough lever; so, I too can hope for great things if I manage to find just one little thing that is solid and certain.

I will suppose, then, that everything I see is fictitious. I will believe that my memory tells me nothing but lies. I have no senses. Body, shape, extension, movement and place are illusions. So, what remains true? Perhaps just the one fact that nothing is certain!

Still, how do I know that there isn't something – not on that list – about which there is no room for even the slightest doubt? Isn't there a God (call him what you will) who gives me the thoughts I am now having? But why do I think this, since I might myself be the author of these thoughts? But then doesn't it follow that I am, at least, something? This is very confusing, because I have just said that I have no senses and no body, and I am so bound up with a body and with senses that one would think that I can't exist without them. Now that I have convinced myself that there is nothing in the world – no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies – does it follow that I don't exist either? No, it does not follow; for if I convinced myself of something then I certainly existed.

But there is a supremely powerful and cunning deceiver who deliberately deceives me all the time! Even then, if he is deceiving me I undoubtedly exist: let him deceive me all he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing while I think I am something. So after thoroughly thinking the matter through I conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, must be true whenever I assert it or think it.

But this 'I' that must exist – I still don't properly understand what it is; so, I am at risk of confusing it with something else, thereby falling into error in the very item of knowledge that I maintain is the most certain and obvious of all. To get straight about what this 'I' is, I shall go back and think some more about what I believed myself to be before I started this meditation. I will eliminate from those beliefs anything that could be even slightly

called into question by the arguments I have been using, which will leave me with only beliefs about myself that are certain and unshakeable.

Well, then, what did I think I was? A man. But what is a man? Shall I say, 'a rational animal'? No; for then I should have to ask what an animal is, and what rationality is – each question would lead me on to other still harder ones, and this would take more time than I can spare. Let me focus instead on the beliefs that spontaneously and naturally came to me whenever I thought about what I was. The first such belief was that I had a face, hands, arms and the whole structure of bodily parts that corpses also have – I call it the body. The next belief was that I ate and drank, that I moved about, and that I engaged in sense-perception and thinking; these things, I thought, were done by the soul. If I gave any thought to what this soul was like, I imagined it to be something thin and filmy – like a wind or fire or ether – permeating my more solid parts. I was more sure about the body, though, thinking that I knew exactly what sort of thing it was. If I had tried to put my conception of the body into words, I would have said this: By a 'body' I understand whatever has a definite shape and position and can occupy a region of space in such a way as to keep every other body out of it; it can be perceived by touch, sight, hearing, taste or smell, and can be moved in various ways.

I would have added that a body can't start up movements by itself, and can move only through being moved by other things that bump into it. It seemed to me quite out of character for a body to be able to initiate movements, or to be able to sense and think, and I was amazed that certain bodies – namely, human ones – could do those things.

But now that I am supposing there is a supremely powerful and malicious deceiver who has set out to trick me in every way he can – now what shall I say that I am? Can I now claim to have any of the features that I used to think belong to a body? When I think about them really carefully, I find that they are all open to doubt: I shan't waste time by showing this about each of them separately. Now, what about the features that I attributed to the soul? Nutrition or movement? Since now I am pretending that I don't have a body, these are mere fictions. Sense perception? One needs a body in order to perceive; and, besides, when dreaming I have seemed to perceive through the senses many things that I later realized I had not perceived in that way. Thinking? At last I have discovered it – thought! This is the one thing that can't be separated from me. I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking. But perhaps no longer than that; for it might be that if I stopped thinking I would stop existing; and I have to treat that possibility as though it were actual, because my present policy is to reject everything that isn't necessarily true. Strictly speaking, then, I am simply a thing that thinks – a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason, these being words whose

meaning I have only just come to know. Still, I am a real, existing thing. What kind of a thing? I have answered that: a thinking thing.

What else am I? I will use my imagination to see if I am anything more. I am not that structure of limbs and organs that is called a human body; nor am I a thin vapor that permeates the limbs – a wind, fire, air, breath, or whatever I imagine; for I have supposed all these things to be nothing because I have supposed all bodies to be nothing. Even if I go on supposing them to be nothing, I am still something. But these things that I suppose to be nothing because they are unknown to me – might they not in fact be identical with the I of which I am aware? I don't know; and just now I shan't discuss the matter, because I can form opinions only about things that I know. I know that I exist, and I am asking: what is this I that I know? My knowledge of it can't depend on things of whose existence I am still unaware; so, it can't depend on anything that I invent in my imagination. The word 'invent' points to what is wrong with relying on my imagination in this matter: if I used imagination to show that I was something or other, that would be mere invention, mere storytelling; for imagining is simply contemplating the shape or image of a bodily thing. That makes imagination suspect, for while I know for sure that I exist, I know that everything relating to the nature of body – including imagination – could be mere dreams; so it would be silly for me to say 'I will use my imagination to get a clearer understanding of what I am' – as silly, indeed, as to say 'I am now awake, and see some truth; but I shall deliberately fall asleep so as to see even more, and more truly, in my dreams'! If my mind is to get a clear understanding of its own nature, it had better not look to the imagination for it.

Well, then, what am I? A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wants, refuses, and also imagines and senses.

That is a long list of attributes for me to have – and it really is I who have them all. Why should it not be? Isn't it one and the same 'I' who now doubts almost everything, understands some things, affirms this one thing – namely, that I exist and think, denies everything else, wants to know more, refuses to be deceived, imagines many things involuntarily, and is aware of others that seem to come from the senses? Isn't all this just as true as the fact that I exist, even if I am in a perpetual dream, and even if my creator is doing his best to deceive me? These activities are all aspects of my thinking and are all inseparable from myself. The fact that it is I who doubt and understand and want is so obvious that I can't see how to make it any clearer. But the 'I' who imagines is also this same 'I'. For even if (as I am pretending) none of the things that I imagine really exist, I really do imagine them, and this is part of my thinking. Lastly, it is also this same 'I' who senses, or is aware of bodily things seemingly through the senses. Because I may be

dreaming, I can't say for sure that I now see the flames, hear the wood crackling, and feel the heat of the fire; but I certainly seem to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false; what is called 'sensing' is strictly just this seeming, and when 'sensing' is understood in this restricted sense of the word it too is simply thinking.

All this is starting to give me a better understanding of what I am. But I still can't help thinking that bodies – of which I form mental images and which the senses investigate – are much more clearly known to me than is this puzzling 'I' that can't be pictured in the imagination. It would be surprising if this were right, though; for it would be surprising if I had a clearer grasp of things that I realize are doubtful, unknown and foreign to me – namely, bodies – than I have of what is true and known – namely my own self. But I see what the trouble is: I keep drifting towards that error because my mind likes to wander freely, refusing to respect the boundaries that truth lays down. Very well, then; I shall let it run free for a while, so that when the time comes to rein it in it won't be so resistant to being pulled back.

Let us consider the things that people ordinarily think they understand best of all, namely the bodies that we touch and see. I don't mean bodies in general – for our general thoughts are apt to be confused – but one particular body: this piece of wax, for example. It has just been taken from the honeycomb; it still tastes of honey and has the scent of the flowers from which the honey was gathered; its color, shape and size are plain to see; it is hard, cold and can be handled easily; if you rap it with your knuckle it makes a sound. In short, it has everything that seems to be needed for a body to be known perfectly clearly. But as I speak these words I hold the wax near to the fire, and look! The taste and smell vanish, the color changes, the shape is lost, the size increases; the wax becomes liquid and hot; you can hardly touch it, and it no longer makes a sound when you strike it. But is it still the same wax? Of course, it is; no one denies this. So, what was it about the wax that I understood so clearly? Evidently it was not any of the features that the senses told me of; for all of them – brought to me through taste, smell, sight, touch or hearing – have now altered, yet it is still the same wax.

Perhaps what I now think about the wax indicates what its nature was all along. If that is right, then the wax was not the sweetness of the honey, the scent of the flowers, the whiteness, the shape, or the sound, but was rather a body that recently presented itself to me in those ways but now appears differently. But what exactly is this thing that I am now imagining? Well, if we take away whatever doesn't belong to the wax (that is, everything that the wax could be without), what is left is merely something extended, flexible and changeable. What do 'flexible' and 'changeable' mean here? I can imaginatively picture this piece of wax changing from round to square, from square to triangular, and so on. But

that isn't what changeability is. In knowing that the wax is changeable I understand that it can go through endlessly many changes of that kind, far more than I can depict in my imagination; so, it isn't my imagination that gives me my grasp of the wax as flexible and changeable. Also, what does 'extended' mean? Is the wax's extension also unknown? It increases if the wax melts, and increases again if it boils; the wax can be extended in many more ways (that is, with many more shapes) than I will ever bring before my imagination. I am forced to conclude that the nature of this piece of wax isn't revealed by my imagination, but is perceived by the mind alone. (I am speaking of this particular piece of wax; the point is even clearer with regard to wax in general.) This wax that is perceived by the mind alone is, of course, the same wax that I see, touch, and picture in my imagination – in short, the same wax I thought it to be from the start. But although my perception of it seemed to be a case of vision and touch and imagination, it isn't so and it never was. Rather, it is purely a perception by the mind alone – formerly an imperfect and confused one, but now clear and distinct because I am now concentrating carefully on what the wax consists in.

As I reach this conclusion I am amazed at how prone to error my mind is. For although I am thinking all this out within myself, silently, I do it with the help of words, and I am at risk of being led astray by them. When the wax is in front of us, we say that we see it, not that we judge it to be there from its color or shape; and this might make me think that knowledge of the wax comes from what the eye sees rather than from the perception of the mind alone. But this is clearly wrong, as the following example shows. If I look out of the window and see men crossing the square, as I have just done, I say that I see the men themselves, just as I say that I see the wax; yet do I see any more than hats and coats that could conceal robots? I judge that they are men.

Something that I thought I saw with my eyes, therefore, was really grasped solely by my mind's faculty of judgment. However, someone who wants to know more than the common crowd should be ashamed to base his doubts on ordinary ways of talking. Let us push ahead, then, and ask: When was my perception of the wax's nature more perfect and clear? Was it when I first looked at the wax, and thought I knew it through my senses? Or is it now, after I have enquired more carefully into the wax's nature and into how it is known? It would be absurd to hesitate in answering the question; for what clarity and sharpness was there in my earlier perception of the wax? Was there anything in it that a lower animal couldn't have? But when I consider the wax apart from its outward forms – take its clothes off, so to speak, and consider it naked – then although my judgment may still contain errors, at least I am now having a perception of a sort that requires a human mind.

But what am I to say about this mind, or about myself? (So far, remember, I don't admit that there is anything to me except a mind.) What, I ask, is this 'I' that seems to perceive the wax so clearly? Surely, I am aware of my own self in a truer and more certain way than I am of the wax, and also in a much more distinct and evident way. What leads me to think that the wax exists – namely, that I see it – leads much more obviously to the conclusion that I exist. What I see might not really be the wax; perhaps I don't even have eyes with which to see anything. But when I see or think I see (I am not here distinguishing the two), it is simply not possible that I who am now thinking am not something. Similarly, that I exist follows from the other bases for judging that the wax exists – that I touch it, that I imagine it, or any other basis, and similarly for my bases for judging that anything else exists outside me. As I came to perceive the wax more distinctly by applying not just sight and touch but other considerations, all this too contributed to my knowing myself even more distinctly, because whatever goes into my perception of the wax or of any other body must do even more to establish the nature of my own mind. What comes to my mind from bodies, therefore, helps me to know my mind distinctly; yet all of that pales into insignificance – it is hardly worth mentioning – when compared with what my mind contains within itself that enables me to know it distinctly.

See! With no effort I have reached the place where I wanted to be! I now know that even bodies are perceived not by the senses or by imagination but by the intellect alone, not through their being touched or seen but through their being understood; and this helps me to understand that I can perceive my own mind more easily and clearly than I can anything else. Since the grip of old opinions is hard to shake off, however, I want to pause and meditate for a while on this new knowledge of mine, fixing it more deeply in my memory.

***Note:** Look for how Descartes attempts to build upon what he considers to be the sole, undoubtable idea. He has attempted to deconstruct all knowledge up to this point. Now, in Meditations 3 and 4, Descartes attempts to rebuild as much knowledge as possible.*

Third Meditation: The existence of God

I will now shut my eyes, block my ears, cut off all my senses. I will regard all my mental images of bodily things as empty, false and worthless (if I could, I would clear them out of my mind altogether). I will get into conversation with myself, examine myself more deeply, and try in this way gradually to know myself more intimately. I am a thing that thinks, i.e., that doubts, affirms, denies, understands some things, is ignorant of many others, wills, and refuses. This thing also imagines and has sensory perceptions; for, as I remarked before, even if the objects of my sensory experience and imagination don't exist

outside me, still sensory perception and imagination themselves, considered simply as mental events, certainly do occur in me.

That lists everything that I truly know, or at least everything I have, up to now, discovered that I know. Now I will look more carefully to see whether I have overlooked other facts about myself. I am certain that I am a thinking thing. Doesn't that tell me what it takes for me to be certain about anything? In this first item of knowledge there is simply a clear and distinct perception of what I am asserting; this wouldn't be enough to make me certain of its truth if it could ever turn out that something that I perceived so clearly and distinctly was false. So, I now seem to be able to lay it down as a general rule that whatever I perceive very clearly and distinctly is true.

I previously accepted as perfectly certain and evident many things that I afterwards realized were doubtful – the earth, sky, stars, and everything else that I took in through the senses – but in those cases what I perceived clearly were merely the ideas or thoughts of those things that came into my mind; and I am still not denying that those ideas occur within me. But I used also to believe that my ideas came from things outside that resembled them in all respects. Indeed, I believed this for so long that I wrongly came to think that I perceived it clearly. In fact, it was false; or anyway if it was true it was not thanks to the strength of my perceptions.

But what about when I was considering something simple and straightforward in arithmetic or geometry, for example that two plus three makes five? Didn't I see these things clearly enough to accept them as true? Indeed, the only reason I could find for doubting them was this: Perhaps some God could have made me so as to be deceived even in those matters that seemed most obvious. Whenever I bring to mind my old belief in the supreme power of God, I have to admit that God could, if he wanted to, easily make me go wrong even about things that I think I see perfectly clearly. But when I turn my thought onto the things themselves – the ones I think I perceive clearly – I find them so convincing that I spontaneously exclaim: 'Let him do his best to deceive me! He will never bring it about that I am nothing while I think I am something; or make it true in the future that I have never existed, given that I do now exist; or bring it about that two plus three make more or less than five, or anything else like this in which I see a plain contradiction.' Also, since I have no evidence that there is a deceiving God, and don't even know for sure that there is a God at all, the reason for doubt that depends purely on this supposition of a deceiving God is a very slight and theoretical one. However, I shall want to remove even this slight reason for doubt; so, when I get the opportunity I shall examine whether there is a God, and (if there is) whether he can be a deceiver. If I don't settle this, it seems, then I can never be quite certain about anything else.

First, if I am to proceed in an orderly way I should classify my thoughts into definite kinds, and ask which kinds can properly be said to be true or false. Some of my thoughts are, so to speak, images or pictures of things – as when I think of a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God – and strictly speaking these are the only thoughts that should be called ‘ideas’.

Other thoughts have more to them than that: for example, when I will, or am afraid, or affirm, or deny, my thought represents some particular thing, but it also includes something more than merely the likeness of that thing. Some thoughts in this category are called volitions or emotions, while others are called judgments.

When ideas are considered solely in themselves and not taken to be connected to anything else, they can’t be false; for whether it is a goat that I am imagining or a chimera, either way it is true that I do imagine it. Nor is there falsity in the will or the emotions; for even if the things I want are wicked or nonexistent, it is still true that I want them. All that is left – the only kind of thought where I must watch out for mistakes – are judgments. And the mistake they most commonly involve is to judge that my ideas resemble things outside me. Of course, if I considered the ideas themselves simply as aspects of my thought and not as connected to anything else, they couldn’t lead me into error.

Among my ideas, some seem to be innate, some to be caused from the outside, and others to have been invented by me. As I see it, my understanding of what a thing is, what truth is, and what thought is, derives purely from my own nature, which means that it is innate; my hearing a noise or seeing the sun or feeling the fire comes from things outside me; and sirens, hippogriffs and the like are my own invention. But perhaps really all my ideas are caused from the outside, or all are innate, or all are made up; for I still have not clearly perceived their true origin.

But my main question now concerns the ideas that I take to come from things outside me: why do I think they resemble these things? Nature has apparently taught me to think that they do.

But also, I know from experience that these ideas don’t depend on my will, and thus don’t depend simply on me. They often come into my mind without my willing them to: right now, for example, I have a feeling of warmth, whether I want to or not, and that leads me to think that this sensation or idea of heat comes from something other than myself, namely the heat of a fire by which I am sitting. And it seems natural to suppose that what comes to me from that external thing will be like it rather than unlike it.

Now let me see if these arguments are strong enough. When I say, 'Nature taught me to think this', all I mean is that I have a spontaneous impulse to believe it, not that I am shown its truth by some natural light. There is a great difference between those. Things that are revealed by the natural light – for example, that if I am doubting then I exist – are not open to any doubt, because no other faculty that might show them to be false could be as trustworthy as the natural light. My natural impulses, however, have no such privilege: I have often come to think that they had pushed me the wrong way on moral questions, and I don't see any reason to trust them in other things.

Then again, although these ideas don't depend on my will, it doesn't follow that they must come from things located outside me. Perhaps they come from some faculty of mine other than my will – one that I don't fully know about – which produces these ideas without help from external things; this is, after all, just how I have always thought ideas are produced in me when I am dreaming. Similarly, the natural impulses that I have been talking about, though they seem opposed to my will, come from within me; which provides evidence that I can cause things that my will does not cause.

Finally, even if these ideas do come from things other than myself, it doesn't follow that they must resemble those things. Indeed, I think I have often discovered objects to be very unlike my ideas of them. For example, I find within me two different ideas of the sun: one seems to come from the senses – it is a prime example of an idea that I reckon to have an external source – and it makes the sun appear very small; the other is based on astronomical reasoning, and it shows the sun to be several times larger than the earth. Obviously, these ideas cannot both resemble the external sun; and reason convinces me that the idea that seems to have come most directly from the sun itself in fact does not resemble it at all.

These considerations show that it isn't reliable judgment but merely some blind impulse that has led me to think that there exist things outside me that give ideas or images of themselves through the sense organs or in some other way.

Perhaps, though, there is another way of investigating whether some of the things of which I have ideas really do exist outside me. Considered simply as mental events, my ideas seem to be all on a par: they all appear to come from inside me in the same way. But considered as images representing things other than themselves, it is clear that they differ widely. Undoubtedly, the ideas that represent substances amount to something more – they contain within themselves more representative reality – than do the ideas that merely represent qualities. Again, the idea that gives me my understanding of a supreme God – eternal, infinite, unchangeable, omniscient, omnipotent and the creator of everything that exists except for himself – certainly has in it more representative

reality than the ideas that represent merely finite substances.

Now it is obvious by the natural light that the total cause of something must contain at least as much reality as does the effect. For where could the effect get its reality from if not from the cause? And how could the cause give reality to the effect unless it first had that reality itself? Two things follow from this: that something can't arise from nothing, and that what is more perfect – that is, contains in itself more reality – can't arise from what is less perfect. And this is plainly true not only for 'actual' or 'intrinsic' reality (as philosophers call it) but also for the representative reality of ideas – that is, the reality that an idea represents. A stone, for example, can begin to exist only if it is produced by something that contains – either straightforwardly or in some higher form – everything that is to be found in the stone; similarly, heat can't be produced in a previously cold object except by something of at least the same order of perfection as heat, and so on. (I don't say simply 'except by something that is hot', because that is not necessary. The thing could be caused to be hot by something that doesn't itself straightforwardly contain heat – i.e. that isn't itself hot – but contains heat in a higher form, that is, something of a higher order of perfection than heat. Thus, for example, although God is obviously not himself hot, he can cause something to be hot because he contains heat not straightforwardly but in a higher form.) But it is also true that the idea of heat or of a stone can be caused in me only by something that contains at least as much reality as I conceive to be in the heat or in the stone. For although this cause does not transfer any of its actual or intrinsic reality to my idea, it still can't be less real. An idea need have no intrinsic reality except what it derives from my thought, of which it is a mode. But any idea that has representative reality must surely come from a cause that contains at least as much intrinsic reality as there is representative reality in the idea. For if we suppose that an idea contains something that was not in its cause, it must have got this from nothing; yet the kind of reality that is involved in something's being represented in the mind by an idea, though it may not be very perfect, certainly isn't nothing, and so it can't come from nothing.

It might be thought that since the reality that I am considering in my ideas is merely representative, it might be possessed by its cause only representatively and not intrinsically. That would mean that the cause is itself an idea, because only ideas have representative reality. But that would be wrong. Although one idea may perhaps originate from another, there can't be an infinite regress of such ideas; eventually one must come back to an idea whose cause isn't an idea, and this cause must be a kind of archetype containing intrinsically all the reality or perfection that the idea contains only representatively. So, the natural light makes it clear to me that my ideas are like pictures or images that can easily fall short of the perfection of the things from which they are

taken, but which can't exceed it.

The longer and more carefully I examine all these points, the more clearly and distinctly I recognize their truth. But what is my conclusion to be? If I find that some idea of mine has so much representative reality that I am sure the same reality doesn't reside in me, either straightforwardly or in a higher form, and hence that I myself can't be the cause of the idea, then, because everything must have some cause, it will necessarily follow that I am not alone in the world: there exists some other thing that is the cause of that idea.

If no such idea is to be found in me, I shall have no argument to show that anything exists apart from myself; for, despite a most careful and wide-ranging survey, this is the only argument I have so far been able to find.

Among my ideas, apart from the one that gives me a representation of myself, which can't present any difficulty in this context, there are ideas that variously represent God, inanimate bodies, angels, animals and finally other men like myself.

As regards my ideas of other men, or animals, or angels, I can easily understand that they could be put together from the ideas I have of myself, of bodies and of God, even if the world contained no men besides me, no animals and no angels.

As to my ideas of bodies, so far as I can see they contain nothing that is so great or excellent that it couldn't have originated in myself. For if I examine them thoroughly, one by one, as I did the idea of the wax yesterday, I realize that the following short list gives everything that I perceive clearly and distinctly in them: size, or extension in length, breadth and depth; shape, which is a function of the boundaries of this extension; position, which is a relation between various items possessing shape; motion, or change in position.

To these may be added substance, duration and number.

But as for all the rest, including light and colors, sounds, smells, tastes, heat and cold and the other qualities that can be known by touch, I think of these in such a confused and obscure way that I don't even know whether they are true or false, that is, whether my ideas of them are ideas of real things or of non-things. Strictly speaking, only judgments can be true or false; but we can also speak of an idea as 'false' in a certain sense – we call it 'materially false' – if it represents a non-thing as a thing. For example, my ideas of heat and cold have so little clarity and distinctness that they don't enable me to know whether cold is merely the absence of heat, or heat is merely the absence of cold, or heat and cold are both real positive qualities, or neither heat nor cold is a real positive quality.

If the right answer is that cold is nothing but the absence of heat, the idea that represents it to me as something real and positive deserves to be called 'false'; and the same goes for other ideas of this kind.

Such ideas obviously don't have to be caused by something other than myself. If they are false – that is, if they represent non-things – then they are in me only because of a deficiency or lack of perfection in my nature, which is to say that they arise from nothing; I know this by the natural light. If on the other hand they are true, there is no reason why they shouldn't arise from myself, since they represent such a slight reality that I can't even distinguish it from a non-thing.

With regard to the clear and distinct elements in my ideas of bodies, it appears that I could have borrowed some of these from my idea of myself, namely substance, duration, number and anything else of this kind. For example, I think that a stone is a substance, or is a thing capable of existing independently, and I also think that I am a substance. Admittedly I conceive of myself as a thing that thinks and isn't extended, and of the stone as a thing that is extended and doesn't think, so that the two conceptions differ enormously; but they seem to have the classification 'substance' in common. Again, I perceive that I now exist, and remember that I have existed for some time; moreover, I have various thoughts that I can count; it is in these ways that I acquire the ideas of duration and number that I can then transfer to other things. As for all the other elements that make up the ideas of bodies – extension, shape, position and movement – these are not straightforwardly contained in me, since I am nothing but a thinking thing; but since they are merely modes of a substance, and I am a substance, it seems possible that they are contained in me in some higher form. That is, I am not myself extended, shaped etc., but because I am a substance I am (so to speak) metaphysically one up on these mere modes, which implies that I can contain within me whatever it takes to cause the ideas of them.

So there remains only the idea of God: is there anything in that which couldn't have originated in myself? By the word 'God' I understand a substance that is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, independent, supremely intelligent, supremely powerful, which created myself and anything else that may exist. The more carefully I concentrate on these attributes, the less possible it seems that any of them could have originated from me alone. So this whole discussion implies that God necessarily exists.

It is true that my being a substance explains my having the idea of substance; but it does not explain my having the idea of an infinite substance. That must come from some substance that is itself infinite. I am finite.

It might be thought that this is wrong, because my notion of the infinite is arrived at merely by negating the finite, just as my conceptions of rest and darkness are arrived at by negating movement and light. That would be a mistake, however. I clearly understand that there is more reality in an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, i.e. God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, i.e. myself. Whenever I know that I doubt something or want something, I understand that I lack something and am therefore not wholly perfect. How could I grasp this unless I had an idea of a perfect being, which enabled me to recognize my own defects by comparison? Nor can it be said that this idea of God could be 'materially false', and thus have come from nothing, as may be the case (I noted this a few moments ago) with the ideas of heat and cold. On the contrary, it is utterly clear and distinct, and contains in itself more representative reality than any other idea; that is, it stands for something that is grander, more powerful, more real, than any other idea stands for; so, it is more true – less open to the suspicion of falsehood – than any other idea. This idea of a supremely perfect and infinite being is, I say, true in the highest degree; for although one might imagine that such a being does not exist, it can't be supposed that the idea of such a being represents something unreal in the way that the idea of cold perhaps does. The idea is, moreover, utterly clear and distinct. It does not matter that I don't grasp the infinite, or that there are countless additional attributes of God that I can't grasp and perhaps can't even touch in my thought; for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself. It is enough that I understand the infinite, and that I judge that all the attributes that I clearly perceive and know to imply some perfection – and perhaps countless others of which I am ignorant – are present in God either straightforwardly or in some higher form. This is enough to make the idea that I have of God the truest and most clear and distinct of all my ideas.

Here is a possible objection to that line of thought. Perhaps I am greater than I myself understand: perhaps all the perfections that I attribute to God are ones that I do have in some potential form, and they merely haven't yet shown themselves in actuality. My knowledge is gradually increasing, and I see no obstacle to its going on increasing to infinity. I might then be able to use this increased and eventually infinite knowledge to acquire all the other perfections of God. In that case, I already have the potentiality for these perfections – why shouldn't this potentiality be enough to enable me to have caused the idea of them that is, to have caused my idea of God? But all this is impossible for three reasons.

First, though it is true that my knowledge is increasing, and that I have many potentialities that are not yet actual, this is all quite irrelevant to the idea of God, which contains absolutely nothing that is potential. Indeed, this gradual increase in knowledge

is itself the surest sign of imperfection, because if I am learning more, that shows that there are things I don't know, and that is an imperfection in me. What is more, even if my knowledge increases for ever, it will never actually be infinite, since it will never reach the point where it isn't capable of a further increase; God, on the other hand, I take to be actually infinite, so that nothing can be added to his perfection. And, thirdly, strictly speaking potential being is nothing; what it takes to cause the representative being of an idea is actual being.

If one concentrates carefully, all this is quite evident by the natural light. But when I relax my concentration, and my mental vision is blurred by the images of things I perceive by the senses, I lose sight of the reasons why my idea of more perfect being has to come from a being that really is more perfect. So, I want to push on with my enquiry, now asking a new question: If the more perfect being didn't exist, could I exist? My hope is that the answer to this will yield a new proof of the existence of a perfect being – a proof that it will be easier for me to keep in mind even when I relax my concentration.

Well, if God didn't exist, from what would I derive my existence? It would have to come from myself, or from my parents, or from some other beings less perfect than God (a being more perfect than God, or even one as perfect, is unthinkable).

If I had derived my existence from myself, I would not now doubt or want or lack anything at all; for I would have given myself all the perfections of which I have any idea. So, I would be God.

Here is a thought that might seem to undercut that argument. Perhaps I have always existed as I do now. In that case, wouldn't it follow that there need be no cause for my existence? No, it does not follow. For a lifespan can be divided into countless parts, each completely independent of the others, so that from my existing at one time it doesn't follow that I exist at later times, unless some cause keeps me in existence – one might say that it creates me afresh at each moment. Anyone who thinks hard about the nature of time will understand that what it takes to bring something into existence is also needed to keep it in existence at each moment of its duration. Thus, there is no real distinction between preservation and creation – only a conceptual one – and this is one of the things that the natural light makes evident.

So, I have to ask myself whether I have the power to bring it about that I, who now exist, will still exist a minute from now. For since I am nothing but a thinking thing – or anyway that is the only part of me that I am now concerned with – if I had such a power I would undoubtedly be aware of it. But I experience no such power, and this shows me quite clearly that I depend for my continued existence on some being other than myself.

Perhaps this being is not God, though. Perhaps I was produced by causes less perfect than God, such as my parents. No; for as I have said before, it is quite clear that there must be at least as much reality or perfection in the cause as in the effect. And therefore, given that I am a thinking thing and have within me some idea of God, the cause of me – whatever it is – must itself be a thinking thing and must have the idea of all the perfections that I attribute to God. What is the cause of this cause of me? If it is the cause of its own existence, then it is God; for if it has the power of existing through its own strength, then undoubtedly it also has the power of actually possessing all the perfections of which it has an idea – that is, all the perfections that I conceive to be in God. If on the other hand it gets its existence from another cause, then the question arises all over again regarding this further cause: Does it get its existence from itself or from another cause? Eventually we must reach the ultimate cause, and this will be God.

It is clear enough that this sequence of causes of causes can't run back to infinity, especially since I am dealing with the cause that not only produced me in the past but also preserves me at the present moment.

One might think this: Several partial causes contributed to my creation; I received the idea of one of the perfections that I attribute to God from one cause, and the idea of another from another.

Each perfection is to be found somewhere in the universe, but no one thing has them all.

That can't be right, because God's simplicity – that is, the unity or inseparability of all his attributes – is one of the most important of the perfections that I understand him to have. The idea of his perfections as united in a single substance couldn't have been placed in me by any cause that didn't also provide me with the ideas of the perfections themselves; for no cause could have made me understand that the perfections are united without at the same time showing me what they are.

Lastly, as regards my parents, even if everything I have ever believed about them is true, it is certainly not they who keep me in existence. Insofar as I am a thinking thing, indeed, they did not even make me; they merely brought about an arrangement of matter that I have always regarded as containing me (that is, containing my mind, for that is all I now take myself to be). So my parents can't be the cause-of-me that I am enquiring about.

Given the failure of every other candidacy for the role of cause of me and of my idea of a most perfect being, I infer that the only successful candidacy is God's. Thus, I conclude that the mere fact that I exist and have within me an idea of a most perfect being – that is, God – provides a clear proof that God does indeed exist.

It remains for me only to ask how I received this idea from God. I didn't get it from the senses: it has never come to me unexpectedly, as do most of the ideas that occur when I seem to see and touch and hear things. And it's not something that I invented, either; for clearly, I can't take anything away from it or to add anything to it. When an idea is surely invented, the inventor is free to fiddle with it – add a bit here, subtract a bit there – whereas my idea of God is a natural unit that doesn't invite or even permit such interference. The only remaining alternative is that my idea of God is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me.

It is no surprise that God in creating me should have placed this idea in me, to serve as a mark of the craftsman stamped on his work (not that he needed any mark other than the work itself). But the mere fact that God created me is a good reason for thinking that I am somehow made in his image and likeness, and that I perceive that likeness in the same way that I perceive myself. That is, when I turn my mind's eye upon myself, I understand that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent on something else, and which aspires without limit to ever greater and better things; but I also understand at the same time that he on whom I depend has within him all those greater things, and hence that he is God. The core of the argument is this: I couldn't exist with the nature that I have – that is, containing within me the idea of God – if God didn't really exist. By 'God' I mean the very being the idea of whom is within me – the one that has no defects and has all those perfections that I can't grasp but can somehow touch with my thought.

This shows clearly that it is not possible for him to be a deceiver, since the natural light makes it clear that all fraud and deception depend on some defect.

But before examining this point more carefully and investigating other truths that may be derived from it, I want to pause here and spend some time contemplating God; to reflect on his attributes and to gaze with wonder and adoration on the beauty of this immense light, so far as the eye of my darkened intellect can bear it. For just as we believe through faith that the supreme happiness of the next life consists in contemplating the divine majesty, so experience tells us that this same contemplation, though much less perfect, provides the greatest joy we can have in this life.

Fourth Meditation: Truth and falsity

In these past few days I have become used to keeping my mind away from the senses; and I have become strongly aware that very little is truly known about bodies, whereas much more is known about the human mind and still more about God. So now I find it easy to turn my mind away from objects of the senses and the imagination, towards objects of the

intellect alone; these are quite separate from matter, whereas the objects of sense and imagination are mostly made of matter.

Indeed, none of my ideas of corporeal things is as distinct as my idea of the human mind, considered purely as a thinking thing with no size or shape or other bodily characteristics.

Now, when I consider the fact that I have doubts – which means that I am incomplete and dependent – that leads to my having a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God. And from the mere fact that I exist and have such an idea, I infer that God exists and that every moment of my existence depends on him. This follows clearly; I am sure, indeed, that the human intellect can't know anything that is more evident or more certain. And now that I can take into account the true God, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge lie hidden, I think I can see a way through to knowledge of other things in the universe.

To begin with, I see that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. Only someone who has something wrong with him will engage in trickery or deception. That someone is able to deceive others may be a sign of his skill or power, but his wanting to deceive them is a sign of his malice or weakness; and those are not to be found in God.

Next, I know from experience that I have a faculty of judgment; and this, like everything else I have, was given to me by God. Since God doesn't want to deceive me, I am sure that he didn't give me a faculty of judgment that would lead me into error while I was using it correctly.

That would settle the matter, except for one difficulty: what I have just said seems to imply that I can never be in error. If everything that is in me comes from God, and he didn't equip me with a capacity for making mistakes, doesn't it follow that I can never go wrong in my beliefs? Well, I know by experience that I am greatly given to errors; but when I focus on God to the exclusion of everything else, I find in him no cause of error or falsity. In looking for the cause of my errors, I am helped by this thought: as well as having a real and positive idea of God (a being who is supremely perfect), I also have what you might call a negative idea of nothingness (that which is furthest from all perfection). I realize that I am somewhere in between God and nothingness, or between supreme being and nonbeing. Now, the positive reality that I have been given by the supreme being contains nothing that could lead me astray in my beliefs. I make mistakes, not surprisingly, because my nature involves nothingness or nonbeing – that is, because I am not myself the supreme being, and lack countless perfections. So, error is not something real that depends on God, but is merely something negative, a lack, a defect. There is, therefore, nothing positively error producing in the faculty of judgment that God gave

me. When I go wrong I do so because the faculty of true judgment that I have from God is in my case not free of all limitations, that is, because it partly involves nothingness.

That is still not quite right. For error isn't a mere negation. Pebbles and glaciers lack knowledge, and in them that lack is a mere negation – the absence of something that there is no reason for them to possess. I have lacks of that kind too, mere negations such as my lack of the ability to fly, or to multiply two 30digit prime numbers in my head. But my tendency to error isn't like that. Rather, it is a privation, that is, a lack of some knowledge that I should have, which means that I still have a problem about how it relates to God. When I think hard about God, it seems impossible that he should have given me a faculty that lacks some perfection that it should have. The more skilled the craftsman, the more perfect the thing that he makes; so, one would expect something made by the supreme creator to be complete and perfect in every way. It is clear, furthermore, that God could have made me in such a way that I was never mistaken; and there is no doubt that he always chooses to do what is best. Does this show that my making mistakes is better than my not doing so? Thinking harder about this, three helpful thoughts come to me. Two concern our knowledge of God's reasons generally; the third is specifically about human error (1) I realize that it is no cause for surprise if I don't always understand why God acts as he does. I may well find other things he has done whose reasons elude me; and that is no reason to doubt his existence. I am now aware that my nature is very weak and limited, whereas God's nature is immense, incomprehensible and infinite; so of course, he can do countless things whose reasons I can't know. That alone is reason enough to give up, as totally useless, the attempt that physicists make to understand the world in terms of what things are for, that is, in terms of God's purposes. Only a very rash man would think he could discover what God's impenetrable purposes are.

(2) In estimating whether God's works are perfect, we should look at the universe as a whole, not at created things one by one. Something that might seem very imperfect if it existed on its own has a function in relation to the rest of the universe, and may be perfect when seen in that light. My decision to doubt everything has left me sure of the existence of only two things, God and myself; but when I think about God's immense power I have to admit that he did or could have made many things in addition to myself, so that there may be a universal scheme of things in which I have a place. If that is so, then judgments about what is perfect or imperfect in me should be made on the basis not just of my intrinsic nature but also of my role or function in the universe as a whole.

(3) My errors are the only evidence I have that I am imperfect. When I look more closely into these errors of mine, I discover that they have two cooperating causes – my faculty of knowledge and my faculty of choice or freedom of the will. My errors, that is, depend on

both (a) my intellect and (b) my will. Let us consider these separately. (a) The intellect doesn't affirm or deny anything; its role is only to present me with ideas regarding which I can make judgments; so strictly speaking it doesn't involve any error at all. There may be many existing things of which my intellect gives me no ideas, but it isn't strictly correct to say that I am deprived of such ideas, as it would be if my nature somehow entitled me to have them. I can give no reason why God ought to have given me more ideas than he did. Just because I understand someone to be a skilled craftsman, I don't infer that he ought to have put into each of his works all the perfections he can give to some of them. So, all I can say is that there are some ideas that I don't have; this is a purely negative fact about me like the fact that I can't fly; it doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with my nature. (b) I can't complain that God gave me a will or freedom of choice that isn't extensive or perfect enough, since I know by experience that will is entirely without limits.

My will is so perfect and so great that I can't conceive of its becoming even greater and more perfect; it is a striking fact that this is true of my will and not of any other aspect of my nature. I can easily see that my faculty of understanding is finite, to put it mildly; and I immediately conceive of a much greater understanding – indeed, of a supremely great and infinite one; and the fact that I can form such an idea shows me that God actually has such an understanding. Similarly, if I examine memory and imagination and the rest, I discover that in my case these faculties are weak and limited, while in God they are immeasurable. It is only the will, or freedom of choice, which I experience as so great that I can't make sense of the idea of its being even greater: indeed, my thought of myself as being somehow like God depends primarily upon my will. God's will is incomparably greater than mine in two respects: it is accompanied by, and made firm and effective by, much more knowledge and power than I have; and it has far more objects than my will does – that is, God makes more choices and decisions than I do. But these comparisons – having to do with the amount of knowledge that accompanies and helps the will, or with the number of states of affairs to which it is applied – do not concern the will in itself, but rather its relations to other things. When the will is considered not relationally, but strictly in itself, God's will does not seem any greater than mine. The will is simply one's ability to do or not do something – to accept or reject a proposition, to pursue a goal or avoid something. More accurately: the freedom of the will consists in the fact that when the intellect presents us with a candidate for acceptance or denial, or for pursuit or avoidance, we have no sense that we are pushed one way or the other by any external force. I can be free without being inclined both ways. Indeed, the more strongly I incline in one direction the more free my choice is – if my inclination comes from natural knowledge (that is, from my seeing clearly that reasons of truth and goodness point that way) or from divine grace (that is, from some mental disposition that God has given me).

Freedom is never lessened – indeed it is increased and strengthened – by natural knowledge and divine grace. When no reason inclines me in one direction rather than another, I have a feeling of indifference – that is, of its not mattering which way I go – and that is the poorest kind of freedom. What it manifests is freedom considered not as a perfection but rather as a lack of knowledge – a kind of negation. If I always saw clearly what was true and good, I should never have to spend time thinking about what to believe or do; and then I would be wholly free although I was never in a state of indifference.

So, the power of willing that God has given me, being extremely broad in its scope and also perfect of its kind, is not the cause of my mistakes. Nor is my power of understanding to blame: God gave it to me, so there can be no error in its activities; when I understand something I undoubtedly understand it correctly. Well, then, where do my mistakes come from? Their source is the fact that my will has a wider scope than my intellect has, so that I am free to form beliefs on topics that I don't understand. Instead of behaving as I ought to, namely by restricting my will to the territory that my understanding covers, that is, suspending judgment when I am not intellectually in control, I let my will run loose, applying it to matters that I don't understand. In such cases there is nothing to stop the will from veering this way or that, so it easily turns away from what is true and good. That is the source of my error and sin.

Here is an example of how (1) the will's behavior when there is true understanding contrasts with (2) its behavior when there isn't. (1) A while ago I asked whether anything in the world exists, and I came to realize that the fact of my raising this question shows quite clearly that I exist. I understood this so clearly that I couldn't help judging that it was true. This was not the 'couldn't help' that comes from being compelled by some external force. What happened was just this: a great light in the intellect was followed by a great inclination in the will. I was not in a state of indifference, feeling that I could as well go one way as the other; but this lack of indifference was a measure of how spontaneous and free my belief was. It would have indicated unfreedom only if it had come from the compulsion of something external, rather than coming from within myself. (2) As well as knowing that I exist, at least as a thinking thing, I have in my mind an idea of corporeal nature; and I am not sure whether my thinking nature – which makes me what I am – is the same as this corporeal nature or different from it. I take it that my intellect has not yet found any convincing reason for either answer; so, I am indifferent with regard to this question – nothing pushes or pulls me towards one answer or the other, or indeed towards giving any answer.

The will is indifferent not only when the intellect is wholly ignorant but also when it doesn't have clear enough knowledge at the time when the will is trying to reach a

decision. A probable conjecture may pull me one way; but when I realize that it is a mere conjecture and not a certain and indubitable reason, that in itself will push me the other way. My experience in the last few days confirms this: the mere fact that I found all my previous beliefs to be somewhat open to doubt was enough to switch me from confidently believing them to supposing them to be wholly false.

If when I don't perceive the truth clearly and distinctly enough I simply suspend judgment, I am behaving correctly and avoiding error. It is a misuse of my free will to have an opinion in such cases: if I choose the wrong side I shall be in error; and even if I choose the right side, I shall be at fault because I'll have come to the truth by sheer chance and not through a perception of my intellect. The latter, as the natural light shows me clearly, should be what influences my will when I affirm things. I have said that error is essentially a privation – a lack of something that I should have – and now I know what this privation consists in. It doesn't lie in the will that God has given me, or even in the mode of operation that God has built into it; rather it consists in my misuse of my will. Specifically, it consists in my lack of restraint in the exercise of my will, when I form opinions on matters that I don't clearly understand.

I can't complain that God did not give me a greater power of understanding than he did: created intellects are naturally finite, and so they naturally lack understanding of many things. God has never owed me anything, so I should thank him for his great generosity to me, rather than feeling cheated because he did not give me everything.

Nor can I reasonably complain that God gave me a will that extends more widely than my intellect. The will is a single unitary thing; its nature is such, it seems, that there could be no way of taking away parts of it. Anyway, should not the great extent of my will be a cause for further thanks to him who gave it to me? Finally, I must not complain that God consents to the acts of will in which I go wrong. What there is in these acts that comes from God is wholly true and good; and it is a perfection in me that I can perform them. Falsity and error are essentially a privation; and this privation isn't something to which God consents, because it isn't a thing at all. Indeed, when it is considered in relation to God as its cause, it isn't really a privation but rather a mere negation. That is, it is a mere fact about something that is not the case; it does not involve the notion that it ought to be the case. I ought to restrain my will when I don't understand, but it isn't true that God ought to have forced such restraint on me. God has given me the freedom to assent or not to assent in cases where he did not give me clear understanding; he is surely not to blame for that. But I am to blame for misusing that freedom by coming to conclusions on matters that I don't fully understand. Of course, God easily could have arranged things so that, while keeping although my freedom and still being limited in what I understand, I

never made a mistake. He could do this either by giving me a clear and distinct understanding of everything that I was ever likely to think about; or by forcing me always to remember that I ought not to form opinions on matters I don't clearly and distinctly understand. I can see that if God had made me this way, I would – considered just in myself, as if nothing else existed – have been more perfect than I actually am.

But the universe as a whole may have some perfection that requires that some parts of it are capable of error while others are not, so that it would be a worse universe if all its parts were exactly alike in being immune from error. I am not entitled to complain about God's giving me a lower role in his scheme of things by selecting me as one of the creatures that isn't protected from error.

What is more, even if I have no power to avoid error by having a clear perception of everything I have to think about, I can avoid it simply by remembering to withhold judgment on anything that isn't clear to me. I admit to having the weakness that I can't keep my attention fixed on a single item of knowledge (such as the no-judgment-when-clarity-of-perception-is-lacking rule); but by attentive and repeated meditation I can get myself to remember it as often as the need arises, and thus to get into the habit of avoiding error.

This is where man's greatest and most important perfection is to be found; so, today's meditation, with its enquiry into the cause of error, has been very profitable. I must be right in my explanation of the cause of error. If I restrain my will so that I form opinions only on what the intellect clearly and distinctly reveals, I cannot possibly go wrong. Here is why. Every clear and distinct perception is undoubtedly something real and positive; so, it can't come from nothing, and must come from God. He is supremely perfect; it would be downright contradictory to suppose that he is a deceiver. So, the clear and distinct perception must be true. So today I have learned not only how to avoid error but also how to arrive at the truth. It is beyond question that I shall reach the truth if I think hard enough about the things that I perfectly understand, keeping them separate from all the other matters in which my thoughts are more confused and obscure. That is what I shall be really careful to do from now on.

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On Empiricism – John Locke

From *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke

Book I – Neither Principles Nor Ideas Are Innate; Chapter I – No Innate Speculative Principles

1. The way shown how we come by any Knowledge, sufficient to prove it not innate.

It is an established opinion amongst some men, that there are in the understanding certain INNATE PRINCIPLES; some primary notions, KOIVAI EVVOIAI, characters, as it were stamped upon the mind of man; which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it. It would be sufficient to convince unprejudiced readers of the falseness of this supposition, if I should only show (as I hope I shall in the following parts of this Discourse) how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions; and may arrive at certainty, without any such original notions or principles. For I imagine any one will easily grant that it would be impertinent to suppose the ideas of colors innate in a creature to whom God hath given sight, and a power to receive them by the eyes from external objects: and no less unreasonable would it be to attribute several truths to the impressions of nature, and innate characters, when we may observe in ourselves faculties fit to attain as easy and certain knowledge of them as if they were originally imprinted on the mind.

But because a man is not permitted without censure to follow his own thoughts in the search of truth, when they lead him ever so little out of the common road, I shall set down the reasons that made me doubt of the truth of that opinion, as an excuse for my mistake, if I be in one; which I leave to be considered by those who, with me, dispose themselves to embrace truth wherever they find it.

2. General Assent the great Argument.

There is nothing more commonly taken for granted than that there are certain PRINCIPLES, both SPECULATIVE and PRACTICAL, (for they speak of both), universally agreed upon by all mankind: which therefore, they argue, must needs be the constant

impressions which the souls of men receive in their first beings, and which they bring into the world with them, as necessarily and really as they do any of their inherent faculties.

3. Universal Consent proves nothing innate.

This argument, drawn from universal consent, has this misfortune in it, that if it were true in matter of fact, that there were certain truths wherein all mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate, if there can be any other way shown how men may come to that universal agreement, in the things they do consent in, which I presume may be done.

4. “What is is,” and “It is possible for the same Thing to be and not to be,” not universally assented to.

But, which is worse, this argument of universal consent, which is made use of to prove innate principles, seems to me a demonstration that there are none such: because there are none to which all mankind give a universal assent. I shall begin with the speculative, and instance in those magnified principles of demonstration, “Whatsoever is, is,” and “It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be”; which, of all others, I think have the most allowed title to innate. These have so settled a reputation of maxims universally received, that it will no doubt be thought strange if any one should seem to question it. But yet I take liberty to say, that these propositions are so far from having a universal assent, that there are a great part of mankind to whom they are not so much as known . . .

Book II—Of Ideas; Chapter I.—Of Ideas In General, And Their Original.

1. Idea is the Object of Thinking.

Every man being conscious to himself that he thinks; and that which his mind is applied about whilst thinking being the IDEAS that are there, it is past doubt that men have in their minds several ideas, —such as are those expressed by the words whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness, and others: it is in the first place then to be inquired, HOW HE COMES BY THEM?

I know it is a received doctrine, that men have native ideas, and original characters, stamped upon their minds in their very first being. This opinion I have at large examined already; and, I suppose what I have said in the foregoing Book will be much more easily admitted, when I have shown whence the understanding may get all the ideas it has; and by what ways and degrees they may come into the mind; —for which I shall appeal to every one’s own observation and experience.

2. All Ideas come from Sensation or Reflection.

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: —How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the MATERIALS of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the MATERIALS of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.

3. The Objects of Sensation one Source of Ideas

First, our Senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects do affect them. And thus, we come by those IDEAS we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities; which when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external objects convey into the mind what produces there those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call SENSATION.

4. The Operations of our Minds, the other Source of them.

Secondly, the other fountain from which experience furnishes the understanding with ideas is, —the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got; —which operations, when the soul comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things without. And such are perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actings of our own minds; —which we, being conscious of and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into our understandings as distinct ideas as we do from bodies affecting our senses. This source of ideas every man has wholly in himself; and though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be called INTERNAL SENSE. But as I call the other Sensation, so I call this REFLECTION, the ideas it affords being such only as the mind gets by reflecting on its own operations within itself. By reflection then, in the following part of this discourse, I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding. These two, I say, viz. external material things, as the objects of SENSATION, and the operations of our own minds

within, as the objects of REFLECTION, are to me the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings. The term OPERATIONS here I use in a large sense, as comprehending not barely the actions of the mind about its ideas, but some sort of passions arising sometimes from them, such as is the satisfaction or uneasiness arising from any thought.

5. All our Ideas are of the one or of the other of these.

The understanding seems to me not to have the least glimmering of any ideas which it doth not receive from one of these two. EXTERNAL OBJECTS furnish the mind with the ideas of sensible qualities, which are all those different perceptions they produce in us; and THE MIND furnishes the understanding with ideas of its own operations.

These, when we have taken a full survey of them, and their several modes, and the compositions made out of them we shall find to contain all our whole stock of ideas; and that we have nothing in our minds which did not come in one of these two ways. Let any one examine his own thoughts, and thoroughly search into his understanding; and then let him tell me, whether all the original ideas he has there, are any other than of the objects of his senses, or of the operations of his mind, considered as objects of his reflection. And how great a mass of knowledge so ever he imagines to be lodged there, he will, upon taking a strict view, see that he has not any idea in his mind but what one of these two have imprinted; —though perhaps, with infinite variety compounded and enlarged by the understanding, as we shall see hereafter.

6. Observable in Children.

He that attentively considers the state of a child, at his first coming into the world, will have little reason to think him stored with plenty of ideas, that are to be the matter of his future knowledge. It is BY DEGREES he comes to be furnished with them. And though the ideas of obvious and familiar qualities imprint themselves before the memory begins to keep a register of time or order, yet it is often so late before some unusual qualities come in the way, that there are few men that cannot recollect the beginning of their acquaintance with them. And if it were worthwhile, no doubt a child might be so ordered as to have but a very few, even of the ordinary ideas, till he were grown up to a man. But all that are born into the world, being surrounded with bodies that perpetually and diversely affect them, variety of ideas, whether care be taken of it or not, are imprinted on the minds of children. Light and colors are busy at hand everywhere, when the eye is but open; sounds and some tangible qualities fail not to solicit their proper senses, and force an entrance to the mind;—but yet, I think, it will be granted easily, that if a child were kept in a place where he never saw any other but black and white till he were a man, he

would have no more ideas of scarlet or green, than he that from his childhood never tasted an oyster, or a pineapple, has of those particular relishes.

7. Men are differently furnished with these, according to the different Objects they converse with.

Men then come to be furnished with fewer or more simple ideas from without, according as the objects they converse with afford greater or less variety; and from the operations of their minds within, according as they more or less reflect on them. For, though he that contemplates the operations of his mind, cannot but have plain and clear ideas of them; yet, unless he turn his thoughts that way, and considers them ATTENTIVELY, he will no more have clear and distinct ideas of all the operations of his mind, and all that may be observed therein, than he will have all the particular ideas of any landscape, or of the parts and motions of a clock, who will not turn his eyes to it, and with attention heed all the parts of it. The picture, or clock may be so placed, that they may come in his way every day; but yet he will have but a confused idea of all the parts they are made up of, till he applies himself with attention, to consider them each in particular.

8. Ideas of Reflection later, because they need Attention.

And hence we see the reason why it is pretty late before most children get ideas of the operations of their own minds; and some have not any very clear or perfect ideas of the greatest part of them all their lives. Because, though they pass there continually, yet, like floating visions, they make not deep impressions enough to leave in their mind clear, distinct, lasting ideas, till the understanding turns inward upon itself, reflects on its own operations, and makes them the objects of its own contemplation. Children when they come first into it, are surrounded with a world of new things which, by a constant solicitation of their senses, draw the mind constantly to them; forward to take notice of new, and apt to be delighted with the variety of changing objects. Thus, the first years are usually employed and diverted in looking abroad. Men's business in them is to acquaint themselves with what is to be found without; and so, growing up in a constant attention to outward sensations, seldom make any considerable reflection on what passes within them, till they come to be of riper years; and some scarce ever at all.

9. The Soul begins to have Ideas when it begins to perceive.

To ask, at what TIME a man has first any ideas, is to ask, when he begins to perceive; — HAVING IDEAS, and PERCEPTION, being the same thing. I know it is an opinion, that the soul always thinks, and that it has the actual perception of ideas in itself constantly, as long as it exists; and that actual thinking is as inseparable from the soul as actual extension is from the body; which if true, to inquire after the beginning of a man's ideas is

the same as to inquire after the beginning of his soul. For, by this account, soul and its ideas, as body and its extension, will begin to exist both at the same time.

10. The Soul thinks not always; for this wants Proofs.

But whether the soul be supposed to exist antecedent to, or coeval with, or some time after the first rudiments of organization, or the beginnings of life in the body, I leave to be disputed by those who have better thought of that matter. I confess myself to have one of those dull souls, that doth not perceive itself always to contemplate ideas; nor can conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move: the perception of ideas being (as I conceive) to the soul, what motion is to the body; not its essence, but one of its operations. And therefore, though thinking be supposed never so much the proper action of the soul, yet it is not necessary to suppose that it should be always thinking, always in action. That, perhaps, is the privilege of the infinite Author and Preserver of all things, who “never slumbers nor sleeps”; but is not competent to any finite being, at least not to the soul of man. We know certainly, by experience, that we SOMETIMES think; and thence draw this infallible consequence, — that there is something in us that has a power to think. But whether that substance PERPETUALLY thinks or no, we can be no further assured than experience informs us. For, to say that actual thinking is essential to the soul, and inseparable from it, is to beg what is in question, and not to prove it by reason; — which is necessary to be done, if it be not a self-evident proposition. But whether this, “That the soul always thinks,” be a self-evident proposition, that everybody assents to at first hearing, I appeal to mankind. It is doubted whether I thought at all last night or no. The question being about a matter of fact, it is begging it to bring, as a proof for it, a hypothesis, which is the very thing in dispute: by which way one may prove anything, and it is but supposing that all watches, whilst the balance beats, think, and it is sufficiently proved, and past doubt, that my watch thought all last night. But he that would not deceive himself, ought to build his hypothesis on matter of fact, and make it out by sensible experience, and not presume on matter of fact, because of his hypothesis, that is, because he supposes it to be so; which way of proving amounts to this, that I must necessarily think all last night, because another supposes I always think, though I myself cannot perceive that I always do so.

But men in love with their opinions may not only suppose what is in question, but allege wrong matter of fact. How else could anyone make it an inference of mine, that a thing is not, because we are not sensible of it in our sleep? I do not say there is no SOUL in a man, because he is not sensible of it in his sleep; but I do say, he cannot THINK at any time, waking or sleeping, without being sensible of it. Our being sensible of it is not necessary to anything but to our thoughts; and to them it is; and to them it always will be necessary,

till we can think without being conscious of it.

11. It is not always conscious of it.

I grant that the soul, in a waking man, is never without thought, because it is the condition of being awake. But whether sleeping without dreaming be not an affection of the whole man, mind as well as body, may be worth a waking man's consideration; it being hard to conceive that anything should think and not be conscious of it. If the soul doth think in a sleeping man without being conscious of it, I ask whether, during such thinking, it has any pleasure or pain, or be capable of happiness or misery? I am sure the man is not; no more than the bed or earth he lies on. For to be happy or miserable without being conscious of it, seems to me utterly inconsistent and impossible. Or if it be possible that the SOUL can, whilst the body is sleeping, have its thinking, enjoyments, and concerns, its pleasures or pain, apart, which the MAN is not conscious of nor partakes in,—it is certain that Socrates asleep and Socrates awake is not the same person; but his soul when he sleeps, and Socrates the man, consisting of body and soul, when he is waking, are two persons: since waking Socrates has no knowledge of, or concernment for that happiness or misery of his soul, which it enjoys alone by itself whilst he sleeps, without perceiving anything of it; no more than he has for the happiness or misery of a man in the Indies, whom he knows not. For, if we take wholly away all consciousness of our actions and sensations, especially of pleasure and pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal identity.

12. If a sleeping Man thinks without knowing it, the sleeping and waking Man are two Persons.

The soul, during sound sleep, thinks, say these men. Whilst it thinks and perceives, it is capable certainly of those of delight or trouble, as well as any other perceptions; and IT must necessarily be CONSCIOUS of its own perceptions. But it has all this apart: the sleeping MAN, it is plain, is conscious of nothing of all this. Let us suppose, then, the soul of Castor, while he is sleeping, retired from his body; which is no impossible supposition for the men I have here to do with, who so liberally allow life, without a thinking soul, to all other animals. These men cannot then judge it impossible, or a contradiction, that the body should live without the soul; nor that the soul should subsist and think, or have perception, even perception of happiness or misery, without the body. Let us then, I say, suppose the soul of Castor separated during his sleep from his body, to think apart. Let us suppose, too, that it chooses for its scene of thinking the body of another man, v. g. Pollux, who is sleeping without a soul. For, if Castor's soul can think, whilst Castor is asleep, what Castor is never conscious of, it is no matter what PLACE it chooses to think in. We have here, then, the bodies of two men with only one soul between them, which we will supposed to sleep and wake by turns; and the soul still thinking in the waking man,

whereof the sleeping man is never conscious, has never the least perception. I ask, then, whether Castor and Pollux, thus with only one soul between them, which thinks and perceives in one what the other is never conscious of, nor is concerned for, are not two as distinct PERSONS as Castor and Hercules, or as Socrates and Plato were? And whether one of them might not be very happy, and the other very miserable? Just by the same reason, they make the soul and the man two persons, who make the soul think apart what the man is not conscious of. For, I suppose nobody will make identity of persons to consist in the soul's being united to the very same numerical particles of matter. For if that be necessary to identity, it will be impossible, in that constant flux of the particles of our bodies, that any man should be the same person two days, or two moments, together.

13. Impossible to convince those that sleep without dreaming, that they think.

Thus, methinks, every drowsy nod shakes their doctrine, who teach that the soul is always thinking. Those, at least, who do at any time SLEEP WITHOUT DREAMING, can never be convinced that their thoughts are sometimes for four hours busy without their knowing of it; and if they are taken in the very act, waked in the middle of that sleeping contemplation, can give no manner of account of it.

14. That men dream without remembering it, in vain urged.

It will perhaps be said, —That the soul thinks even in the soundest sleep, but the MEMORY retains it not. That the soul in a sleeping man should be this moment busy a thinking, and the next moment in a waking man not remember nor be able to recollect one jot of all those thoughts, is very hard to be conceived, and would need some better proof than bare assertion to make it be believed. For who can without any more ado, but being barely told so, imagine that the greatest part of men does, during all their lives, for several hours every day, think of something, which if they were asked, even in the middle of these thoughts, they could remember nothing at all of? Most men, I think, pass a great part of their sleep without dreaming. I once knew a man that was bred a scholar, and had no bad memory, who told me he had never dreamed in his life, till he had that fever he was then newly recovered of, which was about the five or six and twentieth year of his age. I suppose the world affords more such instances: at least every one's acquaintance will furnish him with examples enough of such as pass most of their nights without dreaming.

15. Upon this Hypothesis, the Thoughts of a sleeping Man ought to be most rational.

To think often, and never to retain it so much as one moment, is a very useless sort of thinking; and the soul, in such a state of thinking, does very little, if at all, excel that of a

looking glass, which constantly receives variety of images, or ideas, but retains none; they disappear and vanish, and there remain no footsteps of them; the looking glass is never the better for such ideas, nor the soul for, such thoughts. Perhaps it will be said, that in a waking MAN the materials of the body are employed, and made use of, in thinking; and that the memory of thoughts is retained by the impressions that are made on the brain, and the traces there left after such thinking; but that in the thinking of the SOUL, which is not perceived in a sleeping man, there the soul thinks apart, and making no use of the organs of the body, leaves no impressions on it, and consequently no memory of such thoughts. Not to mention again the absurdity of two distinct persons, which follows from this supposition, I answer, further, —That whatever ideas the mind can receive and contemplate without the help of the body, it is reasonable to conclude it can retain without the help of the body too; or else the soul, or any separate spirit, will have but little advantage by thinking. If it has no memory of its own thoughts; if it cannot lay them up for its own use, and be able to recall them upon occasion; if it cannot reflect upon what is past, and make use of its former experiences, reasonings, and contemplations, to what, purpose does it think? They who make the soul a thinking thing, at this rate, will not make it a much more noble being than those do whom they condemn, for allowing it to be nothing but the subtlest parts of matter. Characters drawn on dust, that the first breath of wind effaces; or impressions made on a heap of atoms, or animal spirits, are altogether as useful, and render the subject as noble, as the thoughts of a soul that perish in thinking; that, once out of sight, are gone forever, and leave no memory of themselves behind them. Nature never makes excellent things for mean or no uses: and it is hardly to be conceived that our infinitely wise Creator should make so admirable a faculty as the power of thinking, that faculty which comes nearest the excellency of his own incomprehensible being, to be so idly and uselessly employed, at least a fourth part of its time here, as to think constantly, without remembering any of those thoughts, without doing any good to itself or others, or being any way useful to any other part of the creation. If we will examine it, we shall not find, I suppose, the motion of dull and senseless matter, anywhere in the universe, made so little use of and so wholly thrown away.

16. On this Hypothesis, the Soul must have Ideas not derived from Sensation or Reflection, of which there is no Appearance.

It is true, we have sometimes instances of perception whilst we are asleep, and retain the memory of those thoughts: but how extravagant and incoherent for the most part they are; how little conformable to the perfection and order of a rational being, those who are acquainted with dreams need not be told. This I would willingly be satisfied in, —whether the soul, when it thinks thus apart, and as it were separate from the body, acts less

rationally than when conjointly with it, or no. If its separate thoughts be less rational, then these men must say, that the soul owes the perfection of rational thinking to the body: if it does not, it is a wonder that our dreams should be, for the most part, so frivolous and irrational; and that the soul should retain none of its more rational soliloquies and meditations.

17. If I think when I know it not, nobody else can know it.

Those who so confidently tell us that the soul always actually thinks, I would they would also tell us, what those ideas are that are in the soul of a child, before or just at the union with the body, before it hath received any by sensation. The dreams of sleeping men are, as I take it, all made up of the waking man's ideas; though for the most part oddly put together. It is strange, if the soul has ideas of its own that it derived not from sensation or reflection, (as it must have, if it thought before it received any impressions from the body,) that it should never, in its private thinking, (so private, that the man himself perceives it not,) retain any of them the very moment it wakes out of them, and then make the man glad with new discoveries. Who can find it reason that the soul should, in its retirement during sleep, have so many hours' thoughts, and yet never light on any of those ideas it borrowed not from sensation or reflection; or at least preserve the memory of none but such, which, being occasioned from the body, must needs be less natural to a spirit? It is strange the soul should never once in a man's whole life recall over any of its pure native thoughts, and those ideas it had before it borrowed anything from the body; never bring into the waking man's view any other ideas but what have a tang of the cask, and manifestly derive their original from that union. If it always thinks, and so had ideas before it was united, or before it received any from the body, it is not to be supposed but that during sleep it recollects its native ideas; and during that retirement from communicating with the body, whilst it thinks by itself, the ideas it is busied about should be, sometimes at least, those more natural and congenial ones which it had in itself, underived from the body, or its own operations about them: which, since the waking man never remembers, we must from this hypothesis conclude either that the soul remembers something that the man does not; or else that memory belongs only to such ideas as are derived from the body, or the mind's operations about them.

18. How knows any one that the Soul always thinks? For if it be not a self-evident Proposition, it needs Proof.

I would be glad also to learn from these men who so confidently pronounce that the human soul, or, which is all one, that a man always thinks, how they come to know it; nay, how they come to know that they themselves think, when they themselves do not perceive it. This, I am afraid, is to be sure without proofs, and to know without perceiving.

It is, I suspect, a confused notion, taken up to serve a hypothesis; and none of those clear truths, that either their own evidence forces us to admit, or common experience makes it impudence to deny. For the most that can be said of it is, that it is possible the soul may always think, but not always retain it in memory. And I say, it is as possible that the soul may not always think; and much more probable that it should sometimes not think, than that it should often think, and that a long while together, and not be conscious to itself, the next moment after, that it had thought.

19. That a Man should be busy in Thinking, and yet not retain it the next moment, very improbable.

To suppose the soul to think, and the man not to perceive it, is, as has been said, to make two persons in one man. And if one considers well these men's way of speaking, one should be led into a suspicion that they do so. For those who tell us that the SOUL always thinks, do never, that I remember, say that a MAN always thinks. Can the soul think, and not the man? Or a man think, and not be conscious of it? This, perhaps, would be suspected of jargon in others. If they say the man thinks always, but is not always conscious of it, they may as well say his body is extended without having parts. For it is altogether as intelligible to say that a body is extended without parts, as that anything thinks without being conscious of it, or perceiving that it does so. They who talk thus may, with as much reason, if it be necessary to their hypothesis, say that a man is always hungry, but that he does not always feel it; whereas hunger consists in that very sensation, as thinking consists in being conscious that one thinks. If they say that a man is always conscious to himself of thinking, I ask, "How they know it?" Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a man's own mind. Can another man perceive that I am conscious of anything, when I perceive it not myself? No man's knowledge here can go beyond his experience. Wake a man out of a sound sleep, and ask him what he was that moment thinking of. If he himself be conscious of nothing he then thought on, he must be a notable diviner of thoughts that can assure him that he was thinking. May he not, with more reason, assure him he was not asleep? This is something beyond philosophy; and it cannot be less than revelation, that discovers to another thoughts in my mind, when I can find none there myself. And they must needs have a penetrating sight who can certainly see that I think, when I cannot perceive it myself, and when I declare that I do not; and yet can see that dogs or elephants do not think, when they give all the demonstration of it imaginable, except only telling us that they do so. This some may suspect to be a step beyond the Rosicrucians;¹⁷ it seeming easier to make one's self invisible to others, than to make another's thoughts visible to me, which are not visible to himself. But it is but defining the soul to be "a substance that always thinks," and the

¹⁷ Rosicrucianism was a 17th century mystical movement in Europe.

business is done. If such definition be of any authority, I know not what it can serve for but to make many men suspect that they have no souls at all; since they find a good part of their lives pass away without thinking. For no definitions that I know, no suppositions of any sect, are of force enough to destroy constant experience; and perhaps it is the affectation of knowing beyond what we perceive, that makes so much useless dispute and noise in the world.

20. No ideas but from Sensation and Reflection, evident, if we observe Children.

I see no reason, therefore, to believe that the soul thinks before the senses have furnished it with ideas to think on; and as those are increased and retained, so it comes, by exercise, to improve its faculty of thinking in the several parts of it; as well as, afterwards, by compounding those ideas, and reflecting on its own operations, it increases its stock, as well as facility in remembering, imagining, reasoning, and other modes of thinking.

21. State of a child on the mother's womb.

He that will suffer himself to be informed by observation and experience, and not make his own hypothesis the rule of nature, will find few signs of a soul accustomed to much thinking in a newborn child, and much fewer of any reasoning at all. And yet it is hard to imagine that the rational soul should think so much, and not reason at all. And he that will consider that infants newly come into the world spend the greatest part of their time in sleep, and are seldom awake but when either hunger calls for the teat, or some pain (the most importunate of all sensations), or some other violent impression on the body, forces the mind to perceive and attend to it;—he, I say, who considers this, will perhaps find reason to imagine that a FOETUS in the mother's womb differs not much from the state of a vegetable, but passes the greatest part of its time without perception or thought; doing very little but sleep in a place where it needs not seek for food, and is surrounded with liquor, always equally soft, and near of the same temper; where the eyes have no light, and the ears so shut up are not very susceptible of sounds; and where there is little or no variety, or change of objects, to move the senses.

22. The mind thinks in proportion to the matter it gets from experience to think about.

Follow a child from its birth, and observe the alterations that time makes, and you shall find, as the mind by the senses comes more and more to be furnished with ideas, it comes to be more and more awake; thinks more, the more it has matter to think on. After some time, it begins to know the objects which, being most familiar with it, have made lasting impressions. Thus, it comes by degrees to know the persons it daily converses with, and distinguishes them from strangers; which are instances and effects of its coming to retain

and distinguish the ideas the senses convey to it. And so, we may observe how the mind, BY DEGREES, improves in these; and ADVANCES to the exercise of those other faculties of enlarging, compounding, and abstracting its ideas, and of reasoning about them, and reflecting upon all these; of which I shall have occasion to speak more hereafter.

23. A man begins to have ideas when he first has sensation. What sensation is.

If it shall be demanded then, WHEN a man BEGINS to have any ideas, I think the true answer is, —WHEN HE FIRST HAS ANY SENSATION. For, since there appear not to be any ideas in the mind before the senses have conveyed any in, I conceive that ideas in the understanding are coeval with SENSATION; WHICH IS SUCH AN IMPRESSION OR MOTION MADE IN SOME PART OF THE BODY, AS MAKES IT BE TAKEN NOTICE OF IN THE UNDERSTANDING.

24. The Original of all our Knowledge.

The impressions then that are made on our sense by outward objects that are extrinsical to the mind; and its own operations about these impressions, reflected on by itself, as proper objects to be contemplated by it, are, I conceive, the original of all knowledge. Thus, the first capacity of human intellect is, —that the mind is fitted to receive the impressions made on it; either through the senses by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them. This is the first step a man makes towards the discovery of anything, and the groundwork whereon to build all those notions which ever he shall have naturally in this world. All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that great extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which SENSE or REFLECTION have offered for its contemplation.

25. In the Reception of simple Ideas, the Understanding is for the most part passive.

In this part the understanding is merely passive; and whether or no it will have these beginnings, and as it were materials of knowledge, is not in its own power. For the objects of our senses do, many of them, obtrude their particular ideas upon our minds whether we will or not; and the operations of our minds will not let us be without, at least, some obscure notions of them. No man can be wholly ignorant of what he does when he thinks. These simple ideas, when offered to the mind, the understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter when they are imprinted, nor blot them out and make new ones itself, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the images or ideas which the objects set before it does therein produce. As the bodies that surround us do diversely affect our organs, the

mind is forced to receive the impressions; and cannot avoid the perception of those ideas that are annexed to them.

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On Subjective Idealism – George Berkeley

From *Three Dialogues* by George Berkeley

The First Dialogue

PHILONOUS. Good morrow, Hylas I did not expect to find you abroad so early.

HYLAS. It is indeed something unusual; but my thoughts were so taken up with a subject I was discoursing of last night, that finding I could not sleep, I resolved to rise and take a turn in the garden.

PHILONOUS It happened well, to let you see what innocent and agreeable pleasures you lose every morning. Can there be a pleasanter time of the day, or a more delightful season of the year? That purple sky, those wild but sweet notes of birds, the fragrant bloom upon the trees and flowers, the gentle influence of the rising sun, these and a thousand nameless beauties of nature inspire the soul with secret transports; its faculties too being at this time fresh and lively, are fit for those meditations, which the solitude of a garden and tranquility of the morning naturally dispose us to. But I am afraid I interrupt your thoughts: for you seemed very intent on something.

HYLAS: It is true, I was, and shall be obliged to you if you will permit me to go on in the same vein; not that I would by any means deprive myself of your company, for my thoughts always flow more easily in conversation with a friend, than when I am alone: but my request is, that you would suffer me to impart my reflections to you.

PHILONOUS With all my heart, it is what I should have requested myself if you had not prevented me.

HYLAS: I was considering the odd fate of those men who have in all ages, through an affectation of being distinguished from the vulgar, or some unaccountable turn of thought, pretended either to believe nothing at all, or to believe the most extravagant things in the world. This however might be borne, if their paradoxes and skepticism did not draw after them some consequences of general disadvantage to mankind. But the mischief lieth here; that when men of less leisure see them who are supposed to have spent their whole time in the pursuits of knowledge professing an entire ignorance of all things, or advancing such notions as are repugnant to plain and commonly received principles, they will be tempted to entertain suspicions concerning the most important truths, which they had hitherto held sacred and unquestionable.

PHILONOUS: I entirely agree with you, as to the ill tendency of the affected doubts of some philosophers, and fantastical conceits of others. I am even so far gone of late in this way of thinking, that I have quitted several of the sublime notions I had got in their schools for vulgar opinions. And I give it you on my word; since this revolt from metaphysical notions to the plain dictates of nature and common sense, I find my understanding strangely enlightened, so that I can now easily comprehend a great many things which before were all mystery and riddle.

HYLAS: I am glad to find there was nothing in the accounts I heard of you.

PHILONOUS: Pray, what were those?

HYLAS: You were represented, in last night's conversation, as one who maintained the most extravagant opinion that ever entered into the mind of man, to wit, that there is no such thing as MATERIAL SUBSTANCE in the world.

PHILONOUS: That there is no such thing as what PHILOSOPHERS CALL MATERIAL SUBSTANCE, I am seriously persuaded: but, if I were made to see anything absurd or **skeptical** in this, I should then have the same reason to renounce this that I imagine I have now to reject the contrary opinion.

HYLAS: What I can anything be more fantastical, more repugnant to Common Sense, or a more manifest piece of Skepticism, than to believe there is no such thing as MATTER?

PHILONOUS: Softly, good Hylas. What if it should prove that you, who hold there is, are, by virtue of that opinion, a greater sceptic, and maintain more paradoxes and repugnancies to Common Sense, than I who believe no such thing?

HYLAS: You may as soon persuade me, the part is greater than the whole, as that, in order to avoid absurdity and Skepticism, I should ever be obliged to give up my opinion in this point.

PHILONOUS: Well then, are you content to admit that opinion for true, which upon examination shall appear most agreeable to Common Sense, and remote from Skepticism?

HYLAS: With all my heart. Since you are for raising disputes about the plainest things in nature, I am content for once to hear what you have to say.

PHILONOUS: Pray, Hylas, what do you mean by a SCEPTIC?

HYLAS: I mean what all men mean—one that doubts of everything.

PHILONOUS: He then who entertains no doubts concerning some particular point, with regard to that point cannot be thought a sceptic.

HYLAS: I agree with you.

PHILONOUS: Whether doth doubting consist in embracing the affirmative or negative side of a question?

HYLAS: In neither; for whoever understands English cannot but know that DOUBTING signifies a suspense between both.

PHILONOUS: He then that denies any point, can no more be said to doubt of it, than he who affirms it with the same degree of assurance.

HYLAS: True.

PHILONOUS: And, consequently, for such his denial is no more to be esteemed a sceptic than the other.

HYLAS: I acknowledge it.

PHILONOUS: How cometh it to pass then, Hylas, that you pronounce me A SCEPTIC,

because I deny what you affirm, to wit, the existence of Matter? Since, for aught you can tell, I am as peremptory in my denial, as you in your affirmation.

HYLAS: Hold, Philonous, I have been a little out in my definition; but every false step a man makes in discourse is not to be insisted on. I said indeed that a SCEPTIC was one who doubted of everything; but I should have added, or who denies the reality and truth of things.

PHILONOUS: What things? Do you mean the principles and theorems of sciences? But these you know are universal intellectual notions, and consequently independent of Matter. The denial therefore of this doth not imply the denying them.

HYLAS: I grant it. But are there no other things? What think you of distrusting the senses, of denying the real existence of sensible things, or pretending to know nothing of them. Is not this sufficient to denominate a man a SCEPTIC?

PHILONOUS: Shall we therefore examine which of us it is that denies the reality of sensible things, or professes the greatest ignorance of them; since, if I take you rightly, he is to be esteemed the greatest SCEPTIC?

HYLAS: That is what I desire.

PHILONOUS: What mean you by Sensible Things?

HYLAS: Those things which are perceived by the senses. Can you imagine that I mean anything else?

PHILONOUS: Pardon me, Hylas, if I am desirous clearly to apprehend your notions, since this may much shorten our inquiry. Suffer me then to ask you this farther question. Are those things only perceived by the senses which are perceived immediately? Or, may those things properly be said to be SENSIBLE which are perceived mediately, or not without the intervention of others?

HYLAS: I do not sufficiently understand you.

PHILONOUS: In reading a book, what I immediately perceive are the letters; but mediately, or by means of these, are suggested to my mind the notions of God, virtue, truth, &c. Now, that the letters are truly sensible things, or perceived by sense, there is no doubt: but I would know whether you take the things suggested by them to be so too.

HYLAS: No, certainly: it was absurd to think GOD or VIRTUE sensible things; though they may be signified and suggested to the mind by sensible marks, with which they have an arbitrary connection.

PHILONOUS: It seems then, that by SENSIBLE THINGS you mean those only which can be perceived IMMEDIATELY by sense?

HYLAS: Right.

PHILONOUS: Doth it not follow from this, that though I see one part of the sky red, and another blue, and that my reason doth thence evidently conclude there must be some cause of that diversity of colors, yet that cause cannot be said to be a sensible thing, or perceived by the sense of seeing?

HYLAS: It doth.

PHILONOUS: In like manner, though I hear variety of sounds, yet I cannot be said to hear the causes of those sounds?

HYLAS: You cannot.

PHILONOUS: And when by my touch I perceive a thing to be hot and heavy, I cannot say, with any truth or propriety, that I feel the cause of its heat or weight?

HYLAS: To prevent any more questions of this kind, I tell you once for all, that by SENSIBLE THINGS I mean those only which are perceived by sense; and that in truth the senses perceive nothing which they do not perceive IMMEDIATELY: for they make no inferences. The deducing therefore of causes or occasions from effects and appearances, which alone are perceived by sense, entirely relates to reason.

PHILONOUS: This point then is agreed between us—That SENSIBLE THINGS ARE THOSE ONLY WHICH ARE IMMEDIATELY PERCEIVED BY SENSE. You will farther inform me, whether we immediately perceive by sight anything besides light, and colors, and figures; or by hearing, anything but sounds; by the palate, anything besides tastes; by the smell, beside odors; or by the touch, more than tangible qualities.

HYLAS: We do not.

PHILONOUS: It seems, therefore, that if you take away all sensible qualities, there remains nothing sensible?

HYLAS: I grant it.

PHILONOUS: Sensible things therefore are nothing else but so many sensible qualities, or combinations of sensible qualities?

HYLAS: Nothing else.

PHILONOUS: HEAT then is a sensible thing?

HYLAS: Certainly.

PHILONOUS: Doth the REALITY of sensible things consists in being perceived? or, is it something distinct from their being perceived, and that bears no relation to the mind?

HYLAS: To EXIST is one thing, and to be PERCEIVED is another.

PHILONOUS: I speak with regard to sensible things only. And of these I ask, whether by their real existence you mean a subsistence exterior to the mind, and distinct from their being perceived?

HYLAS: I mean a real absolute being, distinct from, and without any relation to, their being perceived.

PHILONOUS: Heat therefore, if it be allowed a real being, must exist without the mind?

HYLAS: It must.

PHILONOUS: Tell me, Hylas, is this real existence equally compatible to all degrees of heat, which we perceive; or is there any reason why we should attribute it to some, and deny it to others? And if there be, pray let me know that reason.

HYLAS: Whatever degree of heat we perceive by sense, we may be sure the same exists in the object that occasions it.

PHILONOUS: What! the greatest as well as the least?

HYLAS: I tell you, the reason is plainly the same in respect of both. They are both perceived by sense; nay, the greater degree of heat is more sensibly perceived; and consequently, if there is any difference, we are more certain of its real existence than we can be of the reality of a lesser degree.

PHILONOUS: But is not the most vehement and intense degree of heat a very great pain?

HYLAS: No one can deny it.

PHILONOUS: And is any unperceiving thing capable of pain or pleasure?

HYLAS: No, certainly.

PHILONOUS: Is your material substance a senseless being, or a being endowed with sense and perception?

HYLAS: It is senseless without doubt.

PHILONOUS: It cannot therefore be the subject of pain?

HYLAS: By no means.

PHILONOUS: Nor consequently of the greatest heat perceived by sense, since you acknowledge this to be no small pain?

HYLAS: I grant it.

PHILONOUS: What shall we say then of your external object; is it a material Substance, or no?

HYLAS: It is a material substance with the sensible qualities inhering in it.

PHILONOUS: How then can a great heat exist in it, since you own it cannot in a material substance? I desire you would clear this point.

HYLAS: Hold, Philonous, I fear I was out in yielding intense heat to be a pain. It should seem rather, that pain is something distinct from heat, and the consequence or effect of it.

PHILONOUS: Upon putting your hand near the fire, do you perceive one simple uniform sensation, or two distinct sensations?

HYLAS: But one simple sensation.

PHILONOUS: Is not the heat immediately perceived?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: And the pain?

HYLAS: True.

PHILONOUS: Seeing therefore they are both immediately perceived at the same time, and the fire affects you only with one simple or uncompounded idea, it follows that this same simple idea is both the intense heat immediately perceived, and the pain; and, consequently, that the intense heat immediately perceived is nothing distinct from a particular sort of pain.

HYLAS: It seems so.

PHILONOUS: Again, try in your thoughts, Hylas, if you can conceive a vehement sensation to be without pain or pleasure.

HYLAS: I cannot.

PHILONOUS: Or can you frame to yourself an idea of sensible pain or pleasure in general, abstracted from every particular idea of heat, cold, tastes, smells? c.

HYLAS: I do not find that I can.

PHILONOUS: Doth it not therefore follow, that sensible pain is nothing distinct from those sensations or ideas, in an intense degree?

HYLAS: It is undeniable; and, to speak the truth, I begin to suspect a very great heat cannot exist but in a mind perceiving it.

PHILONOUS: What! are you then in that skeptical state of suspense, between affirming and denying?

HYLAS: I think I may be positive in the point. A very violent and painful heat cannot exist without the mind.

PHILONOUS: It hath not therefore according to you, any REAL being?

HYLAS: I own it.

PHILONOUS: Is it therefore certain, that there is no body in nature really hot?

HYLAS: I have not denied there is any real heat in bodies. I only say, there is no such

thing as an intense real heat.

PHILONOUS: But, did you not say before that all degrees of heat were equally real; or, if there was any difference, that the greater were more undoubtedly real than the lesser?

HYLAS: True: but it was because I did not then consider the ground there is for distinguishing between them, which I now plainly see. And it is this: because intense heat is nothing else but a particular kind of painful sensation; and pain cannot exist but in a perceiving being; it follows that no intense heat can really exist in an unperceiving corporeal substance. But this is no reason why we should deny heat in an inferior degree to exist in such a substance.

PHILONOUS: But how shall we be able to discern those degrees of heat which exist only in the mind from those which exist without it?

HYLAS: That is no difficult matter. You know the least pain cannot exist unperceived; whatever, therefore, degree of heat is a pain exists only in the mind. But, as for all other degrees of heat, nothing obliges us to think the same of them.

PHILONOUS: I think you granted before that no unperceiving being was capable of pleasure, any more than of pain.

HYLAS: I did.

PHILONOUS: And is not warmth, or a more gentle degree of heat than what causes uneasiness, a pleasure?

HYLAS: What then?

PHILONOUS: Consequently, it cannot exist without the mind in an unperceiving substance, or body.

HYLAS: So, it seems.

PHILONOUS: Since, therefore, as well those degrees of heat that are not painful, as those that are, can exist only in a thinking substance; may we not conclude that external bodies are absolutely incapable of any degree of heat whatsoever?

HYLAS: On second thoughts, I do not think it so evident that warmth is a pleasure as that a great degree of heat is a pain.

PHILONOUS: _I_ do not pretend that warmth is as great a pleasure as heat is a pain. But, if you grant it to be even a small pleasure, it serves to make good my conclusion.

HYLAS: I could rather call it an INDOLENCE. It seems to be nothing more than a privation of both pain and pleasure. And that such a quality or state as this may agree to an unthinking substance, I hope you will not deny.

PHILONOUS: If you are resolved to maintain that warmth, or a gentle degree of heat, is no pleasure, I know not how to convince you otherwise than by appealing to your own sense. But what think you of cold?

HYLAS: The same that I do of heat. An intense degree of cold is a pain; for to feel a very great cold, is to perceive a great uneasiness: it cannot therefore exist without the mind; but a lesser degree of cold may, as well as a lesser degree of heat.

PHILONOUS: Those bodies, therefore, upon whose application to our own, we perceive a moderate degree of heat, must be concluded to have a moderate degree of heat or warmth in them; and those, upon whose application we feel a like degree of cold, must be thought to have cold in them.

HYLAS: They must.

PHILONOUS: Can any doctrine be true that necessarily leads a man into an absurdity?

HYLAS: Without doubt it cannot.

PHILONOUS: Is it not an absurdity to think that the same thing should be at the same time both cold and warm?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: Suppose now one of your hands hot, and the other cold, and that they are both at once put into the same vessel of water, in an intermediate state; will not the water seem cold to one hand, and warm to the other?

HYLAS: It will.

PHILONOUS: Ought we not therefore, by your principles, to conclude it is really both cold and warm at the same time, that is, according to your own concession, to believe an absurdity?

HYLAS: I confess it seems so.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, the principles themselves are false, since you have granted that no true principle leads to an absurdity.

HYLAS: But, after all, can anything be more absurd than to say, THERE IS NO HEAT IN THE FIRE?

PHILONOUS: To make the point still clearer; tell me whether, in two cases exactly alike, we ought not to make the same judgment?

HYLAS: We ought.

PHILONOUS: When a pin pricks your finger, doth it not rend and divide the fibers of your flesh?

HYLAS: It doth.

PHILONOUS: And when a coal burns your finger, doth it anymore?

HYLAS: It doth not.

PHILONOUS: Since, therefore, you neither judge the sensation itself occasioned by the pin, nor anything like it to be in the pin; you should not, conformably to what you have now granted, judge the sensation occasioned by the fire, or anything like it, to be in the fire.

HYLAS: Well, since it must be so, I am content to yield this point, and acknowledge that heat and cold are only sensations existing in our minds. But there still remain qualities enough to secure the reality of external things.

PHILONOUS: But what will you say, Hylas, if it shall appear that the case is the same with regard to all other sensible qualities, and that they can no more be supposed to exist without the mind, than heat and cold?

HYLAS: Then indeed you will have done something to the purpose; but that is what I despair of seeing proved.

PHILONOUS: Let us examine them in order. What think you of TASTES, do they exist without the mind, or no?

HYLAS: Can any man in his senses doubt whether sugar is sweet, or wormwood bitter?

PHILONOUS: Inform me, Hylas. Is a sweet taste a particular kind of pleasure or pleasant sensation, or is it not?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: And is not bitterness some kind of uneasiness or pain?

HYLAS: I grant it.

PHILONOUS: If therefore sugar and wormwood are unthinking corporeal substances existing without the mind, how can sweetness and bitterness, that is, Pleasure and pain, agree to them?

HYLAS: Hold, Philonous, I now see what it was delude time. You asked whether heat and cold, sweetness at were not particular sorts of pleasure and pain; to which simply, that they were. Whereas I should have thus distinguished: those qualities, as perceived by us, are pleasures or pain existing in the external objects. We must not therefore conclude absolutely, that there is no heat in the fire, or sweetness in the sugar, but only that heat or sweetness, as perceived by us, are not in the fire or sugar. What say you to this?

PHILONOUS: I say it is nothing to the purpose. Our discourse proceeded altogether concerning sensible things, which you defined to be, THE THINGS WE IMMEDIATELY PERCEIVE BY OUR SENSES. Whatever other qualities, therefore, you speak of as distinct from these, I know nothing of them, neither do they at all belong to the point in dispute. You may, indeed, pretend to have discovered certain qualities which you do not perceive, and assert those insensible qualities exist in fire and sugar. But what use can be made of this to your present purpose, I am at a loss to conceive. Tell me then once more, do you acknowledge that heat and cold, sweetness and bitterness (meaning those qualities which are perceived by the senses), do not exist without the mind?

HYLAS: I see it is to no purpose to hold out, so I give up the cause as to those mentioned qualities. Though I profess it sounds oddly, to say that sugar is not sweet.

PHILONOUS: But, for your farther satisfaction, take this along with you: that which at other times seems sweet, shall, to a distempered palate, appear bitter. And, nothing can be plainer than that divers persons perceive different tastes in the same food;

since that which one man delights in, another abhors. And how could this be, if the taste was something really inherent in the food?

HYLAS: I acknowledge I know not how.

PHILONOUS: In the next place, ODOURS are to be considered. And, with regard to these, I would fain know whether what hath been said of tastes doth not exactly agree to them? Are they not so many pleasing or displeasing sensations?

HYLAS: They are.

PHILONOUS: Can you then conceive it possible that they should exist in an unperceiving thing?

HYLAS: I cannot.

PHILONOUS: Or, can you imagine that filth and ordure affect those brute animals that feed on them out of choice, with the same smells which we perceive in them?

HYLAS: By no means.

PHILONOUS: May we not therefore conclude of smells, as of the other aforementioned qualities, that they cannot exist in any but a perceiving substance or mind?

HYLAS: I think so.

PHILONOUS: Then as to SOUNDS, what must we think of them: are they accidents really inherent in external bodies, or not?

HYLAS: That they inhere not in the sonorous bodies is plain from hence: because a bell struck in the exhausted receiver of an air pump sends forth no sound. The air, therefore, must be thought the subject of sound.

PHILONOUS: What reason is there for that, Hylas?

HYLAS: Because, when any motion is raised in the air, we perceive a sound greater or lesser, according to the air's motion; but without some motion in the air, we never hear any sound at all.

PHILONOUS: And granting that we never hear a sound but when some motion is produced in the air, yet I do not see how you can infer from thence, that the sound

itself is in the air.

HYLAS: It is this very motion in the external air that produces in the mind the sensation of SOUND. For, striking on the drum of the ear, it causes a vibration, which by the auditory nerves being communicated to the brain, the soul is thereupon affected with the sensation called SOUND.

PHILONOUS: What! is sound then a sensation?

HYLAS: I tell you, as perceived by us, it is a particular sensation in the mind.

PHILONOUS: And can any sensation exist without the mind?

HYLAS: No, certainly.

PHILONOUS: How then can sound, being a sensation, exist in the air, if by the AIR you mean a senseless substance existing without the mind?

HYLAS: You must distinguish, Philonous, between sound as it is perceived by us, and as it is in itself; or (which is the same thing) between the sound we immediately perceive, and that which exists without us. The former, indeed, is a particular kind of sensation, but the latter is merely a vibrative or undulatory motion the air.

PHILONOUS: I thought I had already obviated that distinction, by answer I gave when you were applying it in a like case before. But, to say no more of that, are you sure then that sound is really nothing but motion?

HYLAS: I am.

PHILONOUS: Whatever therefore agrees to real sound, may with truth be attributed to motion?

HYLAS: It may.

PHILONOUS: It is then good sense to speak of MOTION as of a thing that is LOUD, SWEET, ACUTE, or GRAVE.

HYLAS: _I_ see you are resolved not to understand me. Is it not evident those accidents or modes belong only to sensible sound, or SOUND in the common acceptance of the word, but not to sound in the real and philosophic sense; which, as I just now told you, is nothing but a certain motion of the air?

PHILONOUS: It seems then there are two sorts of sound—the one vulgar, or that which is heard, the other philosophical and real?

HYLAS: Even so.

PHILONOUS: And the latter consists in motion?

HYLAS: I told you so before.

PHILONOUS: Tell me, Hylas, to which of the senses, think you, the idea of motion belongs? to the hearing?

HYLAS: No, certainly; but to the sight and touch.

PHILONOUS: It should follow then, that, according to you, real sounds may possibly be SEEN OR FELT, but never HEARD.

HYLAS: Look you, Philonous, you may, if you please, make a jest of my opinion, but that will not alter the truth of things. I own, indeed, the inferences you draw me into sound something oddly; but common language, you know, is framed by, and for the use of the vulgar: we must not therefore wonder if expressions adapted to exact philosophic notions seem uncouth and out of the way.

PHILONOUS: Is it come to that? I assure you, I imagine myself to have gained no small point, since you make so light of departing from common phrases and opinions; it being a main part of our inquiry, to examine whose notions are widest of the common road, and most repugnant to the general sense of the world. But, can you think it no more than a philosophical paradox, to say that REAL SOUNDS ARE NEVER HEARD, and that the idea of them is obtained by some other sense? And is there nothing in this contrary to nature and the truth of things?

HYLAS: To deal ingenuously, I do not like it. And, after the concessions already made, I had as well grant that sounds too have no real being without the mind.

PHILONOUS: And I hope you will make no difficulty to acknowledge the same of COLOURS.

HYLAS: Pardon me: the case of colors is very different. Can anything be plainer than that we see them on the objects?

PHILONOUS: The objects you speak of are, I suppose, corporeal Substances existing

without the mind?

HYLAS: They are.

PHILONOUS: And have true and real colors inhering in them?

HYLAS: Each visible object hath that color which we see in it.

PHILONOUS: How! is there anything visible but what we perceive by sight?

HYLAS: There is not.

PHILONOUS: And, do we perceive anything by sense which we do not perceive immediately?

HYLAS: How often must I be obliged to repeat the same thing? I tell you, we do not.

PHILONOUS: Have patience, good Hylas; and tell me once more, whether there is anything immediately perceived by the senses, except sensible qualities. I know you asserted there was not; but I would now be informed, whether you still persist in the same opinion.

HYLAS: I do.

PHILONOUS: Pray, is your corporeal substance either a sensible quality, or made up of sensible qualities?

HYLAS: What a question that is! who ever thought it was?

PHILONOUS: My reason for asking was, because in saying, EACH VISIBLE OBJECT HATH THAT COLOUR WHICH WE SEE IN IT, you make visible objects to be corporeal substances; which implies either that corporeal substances are sensible qualities, or else that there is something besides sensible qualities perceived by sight: but, as this point was formerly agreed between us, and is still maintained by you, it is a clear consequence, that your CORPOREAL SUBSTANCE is nothing distinct from SENSIBLE QUALITIES.

HYLAS: You may draw as many absurd consequences as you please, and endeavor to perplex the plainest things; but you shall never persuade me out of my senses. I clearly understand my own meaning.

PHILONOUS: I wish you would make me understand it too. But, since you are unwilling to have your notion of corporeal substance examined, I shall urge that point no farther. Only be pleased to let me know, whether the same colors which we see exist in external bodies, or some other.

HYLAS: The very same.

PHILONOUS: What! are then the beautiful red and purple we see on yonder clouds really in them? Or do you imagine they have in themselves any other form than that of a dark mist or vapor?

HYLAS: I must own, Philonous, those colors are not really in the clouds as they seem to be at this distance. They are only apparent colors.

PHILONOUS: APPARENT call you them? how shall we distinguish these apparent colors from real?

HYLAS: Very easily. Those are to be thought apparent which, appearing only at a distance, vanish upon a nearer approach.

PHILONOUS: And those, I suppose, are to be thought real which are discovered by the most near and exact survey.

HYLAS: Right.

PHILONOUS: Is the nearest and exactest survey made by the help of a microscope, or by the naked eye?

HYLAS: By a microscope, doubtless.

PHILONOUS: But a microscope often discovers colors in an object different from those perceived by the unassisted sight. And, in case we had microscopes magnifying to any assigned degree, it is certain that no object whatsoever, viewed through them, would appear in the same color which it exhibits to the naked eye.

HYLAS: And what will you conclude from all this? You cannot argue that there are really and naturally no colors on objects: because by artificial managements they may be altered, or made to vanish.

PHILONOUS: I think it may evidently be concluded from your own concessions, that all the colors we see with our naked eyes are only apparent as those on the clouds, since

they vanish upon a more close and accurate inspection which is afforded us by a microscope. Then' as to what you say by way of prevention: I ask you whether the real and natural state of an object is better discovered by a very sharp and piercing sight, or by one which is less sharp?

HYLAS: By the former without doubt.

PHILONOUS: Is it not plain from DIOPTRICS that microscopes make the sight more penetrating, and represent objects as they would appear to the eye in case it were naturally endowed with a most exquisite sharpness?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, the microscopical representation is to be thought that which best sets forth the real nature of the thing, or what it is in itself. The colors, therefore, by it perceived are more genuine and real than those perceived otherwise.

HYLAS: I confess there is something in what you say.

PHILONOUS: Besides, it is not only possible but manifest, that there actually are animals whose eyes are by nature framed to perceive those things which by reason of their minuteness escape our sight. What think you of those inconceivably small animals perceived by glasses? must we suppose they are all stark blind? Or, in case they see, can it be imagined their sight hath not the same use in preserving their bodies from injuries, which appears in that of all other animals? And if it hath, is it not evident they must see particles less than their own bodies; which will present them with a far different view in each object from that which strikes our senses? Even our own eyes do not always represent objects to us after the same manner. In the jaundice everyone knows that all things seem yellow. Is it not therefore highly probable those animals in whose eyes we discern a very different texture from that of ours, and whose bodies abound with different humours, do not see the same colors in every object that we do? From all which, should it not seem to follow that all colors are equally apparent, and that none of those which we perceive are really inherent in any outward object?

HYLAS: It should.

PHILONOUS: The point will be past all doubt, if you consider that, in case colors were real properties or affections inherent in external bodies, they could admit of no alteration without some change wrought in the very bodies themselves: but, is it not

evident from what hath been said that, upon the use of microscopes, upon a change happening in the burnouts of the eye, or a variation of distance, without any manner of real alteration in the thing itself, the colors of any object are either changed, or totally disappear? Nay, all other circumstances remaining the same, change but the situation of some objects, and they shall present different colors to the eye. The same thing happens upon viewing an object in various degrees of light. And what is more known than that the same bodies appear differently colored by candlelight from what they do in the open day? Add to these the experiment of a prism which, separating the heterogeneous rays of light, alters the color of any object, and will cause the whitest to appear of a deep blue or red to the naked eye. And now tell me whether you are still of opinion that everybody hath its true real color inhering in it; and, if you think it hath, I would fain know farther from you, what certain distance and position of the object, what peculiar texture and formation of the eye, what degree or kind of light is necessary for ascertaining that true color, and distinguishing it from apparent ones.

HYLAS: I own myself entirely satisfied, that they are all equally apparent, and that there is no such thing as color really inhering in external bodies, but that it is altogether in the light. And what confirms me in this opinion is, that in proportion to the light colors are still more or less vivid; and if there be no light, then are there no colors perceived. Besides, allowing there are colors on external objects, yet, how is it possible for us to perceive them? For no external body affects the mind, unless it acts first on our organs of sense. But the only action of bodies is motion; and motion cannot be communicated otherwise than by impulse. A distant object therefore cannot act on the eye; nor consequently make itself or its properties perceivable to the soul. Whence it plainly follows that it is immediately some contiguous substance, which, operating on the eye, occasions a perception of colors: and such is light.

PHILONOUS: How is light then a substance?

HYLAS: I tell you, Philonous, external light is nothing but a thin fluid substance, whose minute particles being agitated with a brisk motion, and in various manners reflected from the different surfaces of outward objects to the eyes, communicate different motions to the optic nerves; which, being propagated to the brain, cause therein various impressions; and these are attended with the sensations of red, blue, yellow, c.

PHILONOUS: It seems then the light doth no more than shake the optic nerves.

HYLAS: Nothing else.

PHILONOUS: And consequent to each particular motion of the nerves, the mind is affected with a sensation, which is some particular color.

HYLAS: Right.

PHILONOUS: And these sensations have no existence without the mind.

HYLAS: They have not.

PHILONOUS: How then do you affirm that colors are in the light; since by LIGHT you understand a corporeal substance external to the mind?

HYLAS: Light and colors, as immediately perceived by us, I grant cannot exist without the mind. But in themselves they are only the motions and configurations of certain insensible particles of matter.

PHILONOUS: Colors then, in the vulgar sense, or taken for the immediate objects of sight, cannot agree to any but a perceiving substance.

HYLAS: That is what I say.

PHILONOUS: Well then, since you give up the point as to those sensible qualities which are alone thought colors by all mankind beside, you may hold what you please with regard to those invisible ones of the philosophers. It is not my business to dispute about THEM; only I would advise you to bethink yourself, whether, considering the inquiry we are upon, it be prudent for you to affirm—THE RED AND BLUE WHICH WE SEE ARE NOT REAL COLOURS, BUT CERTAIN UNKNOWN MOTIONS AND FIGURES WHICH NO MAN EVER DID OR CAN SEE ARE TRULY SO. Are not these shocking notions, and are not they subject to as many ridiculous inferences, as those you were obliged to renounce before in the case of sounds?

HYLAS: I frankly own, Philonous, that it is in vain to longer. Colors, sounds, tastes, in a word all those termed SECONDARY QUALITIES, have certainly no existence without the mind. But by this acknowledgment I must not be supposed to derogate, the reality of Matter, or external objects; seeing it is no more than several philosophers maintain, who nevertheless are the farthest imaginable from denying Matter. For the clearer understanding of this, you must know sensible qualities are by philosophers divided into PRIMARY and SECONDARY. The former are Extension, Figure, Solidity, Gravity, Motion, and Rest; and these they hold exist really in bodies. The latter are those above enumerated; or, briefly, ALL SENSIBLE QUALITIES BESIDE THE

PRIMARY; which they assert are only so many sensations or ideas existing nowhere but in the mind. But all this, I doubt not, you are apprised of. For my part, I have been a long time sensible there was such an opinion current among philosophers, but was never thoroughly convinced of its truth until now.

PHILONOUS: You are still then of opinion that EXTENSION and FIGURES are inherent in external unthinking substances?

HYLAS: I am.

PHILONOUS: But what if the same arguments which are brought against Secondary Qualities will hold good against these also?

HYLAS: Why then I shall be obliged to think, they too exist only in the mind.

PHILONOUS: Is it your opinion the very figure and extension which you perceive by sense exist in the outward object or material substance?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: Have all other animals as good grounds to think the same of the figure and extension which they see and feel?

HYLAS: Without doubt, if they have any thought at all.

PHILONOUS: Answer me, Hylas. Think you the senses were bestowed upon all animals for their preservation and wellbeing in life? or were they given to men alone for this end?

HYLAS: I make no question but they have the same use in all other animals.

PHILONOUS: If so, is it not necessary they should be enabled by them to perceive their own limbs, and those bodies which are capable of harming them?

HYLAS: Certainly.

PHILONOUS: A mite therefore must be supposed to see his own foot, and things equal or even less than it, as bodies of some considerable dimension; though at the same time they appear to you scarce discernible, or at best as so many visible points?

HYLAS: I cannot deny it.

PHILONOUS: And to creatures less than the mite they will seem yet larger?

HYLAS: They will.

PHILONOUS: Insomuch that what you can hardly discern will to another extremely minute animal appear as some huge mountain?

HYLAS: All this I grant.

PHILONOUS: Can one and the same thing be at the same time in itself of different dimensions?

HYLAS: That were absurd to imagine.

PHILONOUS: But, from what you have laid down it follows that both the extension by you perceived, and that perceived by the mite itself, as likewise all those perceived by lesser animals, are each of them the true extension of the mite's foot; that is to say, by your own principles you are led into an absurdity.

HYLAS: There seems to be some difficulty in the point.

PHILONOUS: Again, have you not acknowledged that no real inherent property of any object can be changed without some change in the thing itself?

HYLAS: I have.

PHILONOUS: But, as we approach to or recede from an object, the visible extension varies, being at one distance ten or a hundred times greater than another. Doth it not therefore follow from hence likewise that it is not really inherent in the object?

HYLAS: I own I am at a loss what to think.

PHILONOUS: Your judgment will soon be determined, if you will venture to think as freely concerning this quality as you have done concerning the rest. Was it not admitted as a good argument, that neither heat nor cold was in the water, because it seemed warm to one hand and cold to the other?

HYLAS: It was.

PHILONOUS: Is it not the very same reasoning to conclude, there is no extension or figure in an object, because to one eye it shall seem little, smooth, and round, when

at the same time it appears to the other, great, uneven, and regular?

HYLAS: The very same. But does this latter fact ever happen?

PHILONOUS: You may at any time make the experiment, by looking with one eye bare, and with the other through a microscope.

HYLAS: I know not how to maintain it; and yet I am loath to give up EXTENSION, I see so many odd consequences following upon such a concession.

PHILONOUS: Odd, say you? After the concessions already made, I hope you will stick at nothing for its oddness. But, on the other hand, should it not seem very odd, if the general reasoning which includes all other sensible qualities did not also include extension? If it be allowed that no idea, nor anything like an idea, can exist in an unperceiving substance, then surely it follows that no figure, or mode of extension, which we can either perceive, or imagine, or have any idea of, can be really inherent in Matter; not to mention the peculiar difficulty there must be in conceiving a material substance, prior to and distinct from extension to be the SUBSTRATUM of extension. Be the sensible quality what it will—figure, or sound, or color, it seems alike impossible it should subsist in that which doth not perceive it.

HYLAS: I give up the point for the present, reserving still a right to retract my opinion, in case I shall hereafter discover any false step in my progress to it.

PHILONOUS: That is a right you cannot be denied. Figures and extension being dispatched, we proceed next to MOTION. Can a real motion in any external body be at the same time very swift and very slow?

HYLAS: It cannot.

PHILONOUS: Is not the motion of a body swift in a reciprocal proportion to the time it takes up in describing any given space? Thus, a body that describes a mile in an hour moves three times faster than it would in case it described only a mile in three hours.

HYLAS: I agree with you.

PHILONOUS: And is not time measured by the succession of ideas in our minds?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: And is it not possible ideas should succeed one another twice as fast in

your mind as they do in mine, or in that of some spirit of another kind?

HYLAS: I own it.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, the same body may to another seem to perform its motion over any space in half the time that it doth to you. And the same reasoning will hold as to any other proportion: that is to say, according to your principles (since the motions perceived are both really in the object) it is possible one and the same body shall be really moved the same way at once, both very swift and very slow. How is this consistent either with common sense, or with what you just now granted?

HYLAS: I have nothing to say to it.

PHILONOUS: Then as for SOLIDITY; either you do not mean any sensible quality by that word, and so it is beside our inquiry: or if you do, it must be either hardness or resistance. But both the one and the other are plainly relative to our senses: it being evident that what seems hard to one animal may appear soft to another, who hath greater force and firmness of limbs. Nor is it less plain that the resistance I feel is not in the body.

HYLAS: I own the very SENSATION of resistance, which is all you immediately perceive, is not in the body; but the CAUSE of that sensation is.

PHILONOUS: But the causes of our sensations are not things immediately perceived, and therefore are not sensible. This point I thought had been already determined.

HYLAS: I own it was; but you will pardon me if I seem a little embarrassed: I know not how to quit my old notions.

PHILONOUS: To help you out, do but consider that if EXTENSION be once acknowledged to have no existence without the mind, the same must necessarily be granted of motion, solidity, and gravity; since they all evidently suppose extension. It is therefore superfluous to inquire particularly concerning each of them. In denying extension, you have denied them all to have any real existence.

HYLAS: I wonder, Philonous, if what you say be true, why those philosophers who deny the Secondary Qualities any real existence should yet attribute it to the Primary. If there is no difference between them, how can this be accounted for?

PHILONOUS: It is not my business to account for every opinion of the philosophers. But,

among other reasons which may be assigned for this, it seems probable that pleasure and pain being rather annexed to the former than the latter may be one. Heat and cold, tastes and smells, have something more vividly pleasing or disagreeable than the ideas of extension, figure, and motion affect us with. And, it being too visibly absurd to hold that pain or pleasure can be in an unperceiving substance, men are more easily weaned from believing the external existence of the Secondary than the Primary Qualities. You will be satisfied there is something in this, if you recollect the difference you made between an intense and more moderate degree of heat; allowing the one a real existence, while you denied it to the other. But, after all, there is no rational ground for that distinction; for, surely an indifferent sensation is as truly a SENSATION as one more pleasing or painful; and consequently should not any more than they be supposed to exist in an unthinking subject.

HYLAS: It is just come into my head, Philonous, that I have somewhere heard of a distinction between absolute and sensible extension. Now, though it be acknowledged that GREAT and SMALL, consisting merely in the relation which other extended beings have to the parts of our own bodies, do not really inhere in the substances themselves; yet nothing obliges us to hold the same with regard to ABSOLUTE EXTENSION, which is something abstracted from GREAT and SMALL, from this or that particular magnitude or figure. So likewise as to motion; SWIFT and SLOW are altogether relative to the succession of ideas in our own minds. But, it doth not follow, because those modifications of motion exist not without the mind, that therefore absolute motion abstracted from them doth not.

PHILONOUS: Pray what is it that distinguishes one motion, or one part of extension, from another? Is it not something sensible, as some degree of swiftness or slowness, some certain magnitude or figure peculiar to each?

HYLAS: I think so.

PHILONOUS: These qualities, therefore, stripped of all sensible properties, are without all specific and numerical differences, as the schools call them.

HYLAS: They are.

PHILONOUS: That is to say, they are extension in general, and motion in general.

HYLAS: Let it be so.

PHILONOUS: But it is a universally received maxim that EVERYTHING WHICH EXISTS

IS PARTICULAR. How then can motion in general, or extension in general, exist in any corporeal substance?

HYLAS: I will take time to solve your difficulty.

PHILONOUS: But I think the point may be speedily decided. Without doubt you can tell whether you are able to frame this or that idea. Now I am content to put our dispute on this issue. If you can frame in your thoughts a distinct ABSTRACT IDEA of motion or extension, divested of all those sensible modes, as swift and slow, great and small, round and square, and the like, which are acknowledged to exist only in the mind, I will then yield the point you contend for. But if you cannot, it will be unreasonable on your side to insist any longer upon what you have no notion of.

HYLAS: To confess ingenuously, I cannot.

PHILONOUS: Can you even separate the ideas of extension and motion from the ideas of all those qualities which they who make the distinction term SECONDARY?

HYLAS: What! is it not an easy matter to consider extension and motion by themselves, abstracted from all other sensible qualities? Pray how do the mathematicians treat of them?

PHILONOUS: I acknowledge, Hylas, it is not difficult to form general propositions and reasonings about those qualities, without mentioning any other; and, in this sense, to consider or treat of them abstractedly. But, how doth it follow that, because I can pronounce the word MOTION by itself, I can form the idea of it in my mind exclusive of body? or, because theorems may be made of extension and figures, without any mention of GREAT or SMALL, or any other sensible mode or quality, that therefore it is possible such an abstract idea of extension, without any particular size or figure, or sensible quality, should be distinctly formed, and apprehended by the mind? Mathematicians treat of quantity, without regarding what other sensible qualities it is attended with, as being altogether indifferent to their demonstrations. But, when laying aside the words, they contemplate the bare ideas, I believe you will find, they are not the pure abstracted ideas of extension.

HYLAS: But what say you to PURE INTELLECT? May not abstracted ideas be framed by that faculty?

PHILONOUS: Since I cannot frame abstract ideas at all, it is plain I cannot frame them by the help of PURE INTELLECT; whatsoever faculty you understand by those words.

Besides, not to inquire into the nature of pure intellect and its spiritual objects, as VIRTUE, REASON, GOD, or the like, thus much seems manifest—that sensible things are only to be perceived by sense, or represented by the imagination. Figures, therefore, and extension, being originally perceived by sense, do not belong to pure intellect: but, for your farther satisfaction, try if you can frame the idea of any figure, abstracted from all particularities of size, or even from other sensible qualities.

HYLAS: Let me think a little—I do not find that I can.

PHILONOUS: And can you think it possible that should really exist in nature which implies a repugnancy in its conception?

HYLAS: By no means.

PHILONOUS: Since therefore it is impossible even for the mind to disunite the ideas of extension and motion from all other sensible qualities, doth it not follow, that where the one exist there necessarily the other exist likewise?

HYLAS: It should seem so.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, the very same arguments which you admitted as conclusive against the Secondary Qualities are, without any farther application of force, against the Primary too. Besides, if you will trust your senses, is it not plain all sensible qualities coexist, or to them appear as being in the same place? Do they ever represent a motion, or figure, as being divested of all other visible and tangible qualities?

HYLAS: You need say no more on this head. I am free to own, if there be no secret error or oversight in our proceedings hitherto, that all sensible qualities are alike to be denied existence without the mind. But, my fear is that I have been too liberal in my former concessions, or overlooked some fallacy or other. In short, I did not take time to think.

PHILONOUS: For that matter, Hylas, you may take what time you please in reviewing the progress of our inquiry. You are at liberty to recover any slips you might have made, or offer whatever you have omitted which makes for your first opinion.

HYLAS: One great oversight I take to be this—that I did not sufficiently distinguish the OBJECT from the SENSATION. Now, though this latter may not exist without the mind, yet it will not thence follow that the former cannot.

PHILONOUS: What object do you mean? the object of the senses?

HYLAS: The same.

PHILONOUS: It is then immediately perceived?

HYLAS: Right.

PHILONOUS: Make me to understand the difference between what is immediately perceived and a sensation.

HYLAS: The sensation I take to be an act of the mind perceiving; besides which, there is something perceived; and this I call the OBJECT. For example, there is red and yellow on that tulip. But then the act of perceiving those colors is in me only, and not in the tulip.

PHILONOUS: What tulip do you speak of? Is it that which you see?

HYLAS: The same.

PHILONOUS: And what do you see beside color, figure, and extension?

HYLAS: Nothing.

PHILONOUS: What you would say then is that the red and yellow are coexistent with the extension; is it not?

HYLAS: That is not all; I would say they have a real existence without the mind, in some unthinking substance.

PHILONOUS: That the colors are really in the tulip which I see is manifest. Neither can it be denied that this tulip may exist independent of your mind or mine; but, that any immediate object of the senses, –that is, any idea, or combination of ideas– should exist in an unthinking substance, or exterior to ALL minds, is in itself an evident contradiction. Nor can I imagine how this follows from what you said just now, to wit, that the red and yellow were on the tulip you SAW, since you do not pretend to SEE that unthinking substance.

HYLAS: You have an artful way, Philonous, of diverting our inquiry from the subject.

PHILONOUS: I see you have no mind to be pressed that way. To return then to your

distinction between SENSATION and OBJECT; if I take you right, you distinguish in every perception two things, the one an action of the mind, the other not.

HYLAS: True.

PHILONOUS: And this action cannot exist in, or belong to, any unthinking thing; but, whatever beside is implied in a perception may?

HYLAS: That is my meaning.

PHILONOUS: So that if there was a perception without any act of the mind, it were possible such a perception should exist in an unthinking substance?

HYLAS: I grant it. But it is impossible there should be such a perception.

PHILONOUS: When is the mind said to be active?

HYLAS: When it produces, puts an end to, or changes, anything.

PHILONOUS: Can the mind produce, discontinue, or change anything, but by an act of the will?

HYLAS: It cannot.

PHILONOUS: The mind therefore is to be accounted ACTIVE in its perceptions so far forth as VOLITION is included in them?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: In plucking this flower I am active; because I do it by the motion of my hand, which was consequent upon my volition; so likewise in applying it to my nose. But is either of these smelling?

HYLAS: NO.

PHILONOUS: I act too in drawing the air through my nose; because my breathing so rather than otherwise is the effect of my volition. But neither can this be called SMELLING: for, if it were, I should smell every time I breathed in that manner?

HYLAS: True.

PHILONOUS: Smelling then is somewhat consequent to all this?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: But I do not find my will concerned any farther. Whatever more there is—as that I perceive such a particular smell, or any smell at all—this is independent of my will, and therein I am altogether passive. Do you find it otherwise with you, Hylas?

HYLAS: No, the very same.

PHILONOUS: Then, as to seeing, is it not in your power to open your eyes, or keep them shut; to turn them this or that way?

HYLAS: Without doubt.

PHILONOUS: But, doth it in like manner depend on YOUR will that in looking on this flower you perceive WHITE rather than any other color? Or, directing your open eyes towards yonder part of the heaven, can you avoid seeing the sun? Or is light or darkness the effect of your volition?

HYLAS: No, certainly.

PHILONOUS: You are then in these respects altogether passive?

HYLAS: I am.

PHILONOUS: Tell me now, whether SEEING consists in perceiving light and colors, or in opening and turning the eyes?

HYLAS: Without doubt, in the former.

PHILONOUS: Since therefore you are in the very perception of light and colors altogether passive, what is become of that action you were speaking of as an ingredient in every sensation? And, doth it not follow from your own concessions, that the perception of light and colors, including no action in it, may exist in an unperceiving substance? And is not this a plain contradiction?

HYLAS: I know not what to think of it.

PHILONOUS: Besides, since you distinguish the ACTIVE and PASSIVE in every perception, you must do it in that of pain. But how is it possible that pain, be it as

little active as you please, should exist in an unperceiving substance? In short, do but consider the point, and then confess ingenuously, whether light and colors, tastes, sounds, c. are not all equally passions or sensations in the soul. You may indeed call them EXTERNAL OBJECTS, and give them in words what subsistence you please. But, examine your own thoughts, and then tell me whether it be not as I say?

HYLAS: I acknowledge, Philonous, that, upon a fair observation of what passes in my mind, I can discover nothing else but that I am a thinking being, affected with variety of sensations; neither is it possible to conceive how a sensation should exist in an unperceiving substance. But then, on the other hand, when I look on sensible things in a different view, considering them as so many modes and qualities, I find it necessary to suppose a MATERIAL SUBSTRATUM, without which they cannot be conceived to exist.

PHILONOUS: MATERIAL SUBSTRATUM call you it? Pray, by which of your senses came you acquainted with that being?

HYLAS: It is not itself sensible; its modes and qualities only being perceived by the senses.

PHILONOUS: I presume then it was by reflection and reason you obtained the idea of it?

HYLAS: I do not pretend to any proper positive IDEA of it. However, I conclude it exists, because qualities cannot be conceived to exist without a support.

PHILONOUS: It seems then you have only a relative NOTION of it, or that you conceive it not otherwise than by conceiving the relation it bears to sensible qualities?

HYLAS: Right.

PHILONOUS: Be pleased therefore to let me know wherein that relation consists.

HYLAS: Is it not sufficiently expressed in the term SUBSTRATUM, or SUBSTANCE?

PHILONOUS: If so, the word SUBSTRATUM should import that it is spread under the sensible qualities or accidents?

HYLAS: True.

PHILONOUS: And consequently under extension?

HYLAS: I own it.

PHILONOUS: It is therefore somewhat in its own nature entirely distinct from extension?

HYLAS: I tell you, extension is only a mode, and Matter is something that supports modes. And is it not evident the thing supported is different from the thing supporting?

PHILONOUS: So that something distinct from, and exclusive of, extension is supposed to be the SUBSTRATUM of extension?

HYLAS: Just so.

PHILONOUS: Answer me, Hylas. Can a thing be spread without extension? or is not the idea of extension necessarily included in SPREADING?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: Whatsoever therefore you suppose spread under anything must have in itself an extension distinct from the extension of that thing under which it is spread?

HYLAS: It must.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, every corporeal substance, being the SUBSTRATUM of extension, must have in itself another extension, by which it is qualified to be a SUBSTRATUM: and so on to infinity. And I ask whether this be not absurd in itself, and repugnant to what you granted just now, to wit, that the SUBSTRATUM was something distinct from and exclusive of extension?

HYLAS: Aye but, Philonous, you take me wrong. I do not mean that Matter is SPREAD in a gross literal sense under extension. The word SUBSTRATUM is used only to express in general the same thing with SUBSTANCE.

PHILONOUS: Well then, let us examine the relation implied in the term SUBSTANCE. Is it not that it stands under accidents?

HYLAS: The very same.

PHILONOUS: But, that one thing may stand under or support another, must it not be extended?

HYLAS: It must.

PHILONOUS: Is not therefore this supposition liable to the same absurdity with the former?

HYLAS: You still take things in a strict literal sense. That is not fair, Philonous.

PHILONOUS: I am not for imposing any sense on your words: you are at liberty to explain them as you please. Only, I beseech you, make me understand something by them. You tell me Matter supports or stands under accidents. How! is it as your legs support your body?

HYLAS: No; that is the literal sense.

PHILONOUS: Pray let me know any sense, literal or not literal, that you understand it in.—How long must I wait for an answer, Hylas?

HYLAS: I declare I know not what to say. I once thought I understood well enough what was meant by Matter's supporting accidents. But now, the more I think on it the less can I comprehend it: in short, I find that I know nothing of it.

PHILONOUS: It seems then you have no idea at all, neither relative nor positive, of Matter; you know neither what it is in itself, nor what relation it bears to accidents?

HYLAS: I acknowledge it.

PHILONOUS: And yet you asserted that you could not conceive how qualities or accidents should really exist, without conceiving at the same time a material support of them?

HYLAS: I did.

PHILONOUS: That is to say, when you conceive the real existence of qualities, you do withal conceive Something which you cannot conceive?

HYLAS: It was wrong, I own. But still I fear there is some fallacy or other. Pray what think you of this? It is just come into my head that the ground of all our mistake lies in your treating of each quality by itself. Now, I grant that each quality cannot singly subsist without the mind. Color cannot without extension, neither can figure without some other sensible quality. But, as the several qualities united or blended together form entire sensible things, nothing hinders why such things may not be supposed to exist

without the mind.

PHILONOUS: Either, Hylas, you are jesting, or have a very bad memory. Though indeed we went through all the qualities by name one after another, yet my arguments or rather your concessions, nowhere tended to prove that the Secondary Qualities did not subsist each alone by itself; but, that they were not AT ALL without the mind. Indeed, in treating of figure and motion we concluded they could not exist without the mind, because it was impossible even in thought to separate them from all secondary qualities, so as to conceive them existing by themselves. But then this was not the only argument made use of upon that occasion. But (to pass by all that hath been hitherto said, and reckon it for nothing, if you will have it so) I am content to put the whole upon this issue. If you can conceive it possible for any mixture or combination of qualities, or any sensible object whatever, to exist without the mind, then I will grant it actually to be so.

HYLAS: If it comes to that the point will soon be decided. What more easy than to conceive a tree or house existing by itself, independent of, and unperceived by, any mind whatsoever? I do at this present time conceive them existing after that manner.

PHILONOUS: How say you, Hylas, can you see a thing which is at the same time unseen?

HYLAS: No, that were a contradiction.

PHILONOUS: Is it not as great a contradiction to talk of CONCEIVING a thing which is UNCONCEIVED?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: The, tree or house therefore which you think of is conceived by you?

HYLAS: How should it be otherwise?

PHILONOUS: And what is conceived is surely in the mind?

HYLAS: Without question, that which is conceived is in the mind.

PHILONOUS: How then came you to say, you conceived a house or tree existing independent and out of all minds whatsoever?

HYLAS: That was I own an oversight; but stay, let me consider what led me into it. –It is a pleasant mistake enough. As I was thinking of a tree in a solitary place, where no one

was present to see it, methought that was to conceive a tree as existing unperceived or unthought of; not considering that I myself conceived it all the while. But now I plainly see that all I can do is to frame ideas in my own mind. I may indeed conceive in my own thoughts the idea of a tree, or a house, or a mountain, but that is all. And this is far from proving that I can conceive them EXISTING OUT OF THE MINDS OF ALL SPIRITS.

PHILONOUS: You acknowledge then that you cannot possibly conceive how any one corporeal sensible thing should exist otherwise than in the mind?

HYLAS: I do.

PHILONOUS: And yet you will earnestly contend for the truth of that which you cannot so much as conceive?

HYLAS: I profess I know not what to think; but still there are some scruples remain with me. Is it not certain I SEE THINGS at a distance? Do we not perceive the stars and moon, for example, to be a great way off? Is not this, I say, manifest to the senses?

PHILONOUS: Do you not in a dream too perceive those or the like objects?

HYLAS: I do.

PHILONOUS: And have they not then the same appearance of being distant?

HYLAS: They have.

PHILONOUS: But you do not thence conclude the apparitions in a dream to be without the mind?

HYLAS: By no means.

PHILONOUS: You ought not therefore to conclude that sensible objects are without the mind, from their appearance, or manner wherein they are perceived.

HYLAS: I acknowledge it. But doth not my sense deceive me in those cases?

PHILONOUS: By no means. The idea or thing which you immediately perceive, neither sense nor reason informs you that it actually exists without the mind. By sense you only know that you are affected with such certain sensations of light and colors, c. And these you will not say are without the mind.

HYLAS: True: but, beside all that, do you not think the sight suggests something of
OUTNESS OR DISTANCE?

PHILONOUS: Upon approaching a distant object, do the visible size and figure change
perpetually, or do they appear the same at all distances?

HYLAS: They are in a continual change.

PHILONOUS: Sight therefore doth not suggest, or any way inform you, that the visible
object you immediately perceive exists at a distance, or will be perceived when you
advance farther onward; there being a continued series of visible objects succeeding
each other during the whole time of your approach.

HYLAS: It doth not; but still I know, upon seeing an object, what object I shall perceive
after having passed over a certain distance: no matter whether it be exactly the same
or no: there is still something of distance suggested in the case.

PHILONOUS: Good Hylas, do but reflect a little on the point, and then tell me whether
there be any more in it than this: from the ideas you actually perceive by sight, you
have by experience learned to collect what other ideas you will (according to the
standing order of nature) be affected with, after such a certain succession of time and
motion.

HYLAS: Upon the whole, I take it to be nothing else.

PHILONOUS: Now, is it not plain that if we suppose a man born blind was on a sudden
made to see, he could at first have no experience of what may be SUGGESTED by
sight?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: He would not then, according to you, have any notion of distance annexed
to the things he saw; but would take them for a new set of sensations, existing only in
his mind?

HYLAS: It is undeniable.

PHILONOUS: But, to make it still more plain: is not DISTANCE a line turned endwise to
the eye?

HYLAS: It is.

PHILONOUS: And can a line so situated be perceived by sight?

HYLAS: It cannot.

PHILONOUS: Doth it not therefore follow that distance is not properly and immediately perceived by sight?

HYLAS: It should seem so.

PHILONOUS: Again, is it your opinion that colors are at a distance?

HYLAS: It must be acknowledged they are only in the mind.

PHILONOUS: But do not colors appear to the eye as coexisting in the same place with extension and figures?

HYLAS: They do.

PHILONOUS: How can you then conclude from sight that figures exist without, when you acknowledge colors do not; the sensible appearance being the very same with regard to both?

HYLAS: I know not what to answer.

PHILONOUS: But, allowing that distance was truly and immediately perceived by the mind, yet it would not thence follow it existed out of the mind. For, whatever is immediately perceived is an idea: and can any idea exist out of the mind?

HYLAS: To suppose that were absurd: but, inform me, Philonous, can we perceive or know nothing beside our ideas?

PHILONOUS: As for the rational deducing of causes from effects, that is beside our inquiry. And, by the senses you can best tell whether you perceive anything which is not immediately perceived. And I ask you, whether the things immediately perceived are other than your own sensations or ideas? You have indeed more than once, in the course of this conversation, declared yourself on those points; but you seem, by this last question, to have departed from what you then thought.

HYLAS: To speak the truth, Philonous, I think there are two kinds of objects: –the one perceived immediately, which are likewise called IDEAS; the other are real things or external objects, perceived by the mediation of ideas, which are their images and

representations. Now, I own ideas do not exist without the mind; but the latter sort of objects do. I am sorry I did not think of this distinction sooner; it would probably have cut short your discourse.

PHILONOUS: Are those external objects perceived by sense or by some other faculty?

HYLAS: They are perceived by sense.

PHILONOUS: How! Is there anything perceived by sense which is not immediately perceived?

HYLAS: Yes, Philonous, in some sort there is. For example, when I look on a picture or statue of Julius Caesar, I may be said after a manner to perceive him (though not immediately) by my senses.

PHILONOUS: It seems then you will have our ideas, which alone are immediately perceived, to be pictures of external things: and that these also are perceived by sense, inasmuch as they have a conformity or resemblance to our ideas?

HYLAS: That is my meaning.

PHILONOUS: And, in the same way that Julius Caesar, in himself invisible, is nevertheless perceived by sight; real things, in themselves imperceptible, are perceived by sense.

HYLAS: In the very same.

PHILONOUS: Tell me, Hylas, when you behold the picture of Julius Caesar, do you see with your eyes any more than some colors and figures, with a certain symmetry and composition of the whole?

HYLAS: Nothing else.

PHILONOUS: And would not a man who had never known anything of Julius Caesar see as much?

HYLAS: He would.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, he hath his sight, and the use of it, in as perfect a degree as you?

HYLAS: I agree with you.

PHILONOUS: Whence comes it then that your thoughts are directed to the Roman emperor, and his are not? This cannot proceed from the sensations or ideas of sense by you then perceived; since you acknowledge you have no advantage over him in that respect. It should seem therefore to proceed from reason and memory: should it not?

HYLAS: It should.

PHILONOUS: Consequently, it will not follow from that instance that anything is perceived by sense which is not, immediately perceived. Though I grant we may, in one acceptation, be said to perceive sensible things mediately by sense: that is, when, from a frequently perceived connection, the immediate perception of ideas by one sense SUGGESTS to the mind others, perhaps belonging to another sense, which are wont to be connected with them. For instance, when I hear a coach drive along the streets, immediately I perceive only the sound; but, from the experience I have had that such a sound is connected with a coach, I am said to hear the coach. It is nevertheless evident that, in truth and strictness, nothing can be HEARD BUT SOUND; and the coach is not then properly perceived by sense, but suggested from experience. So likewise, when we are said to see a red-hot bar of iron; the solidity and heat of the iron are not the objects of sight, but suggested to the imagination by the color and figure which are properly perceived by that sense. In short, those things alone are actually and strictly perceived by any sense, which would have been perceived in case that same sense had then been first conferred on us. As for other things, it is plain they are only suggested to the mind by experience, grounded on former perceptions. But, to return to your comparison of Caesar's picture, it is plain, if you keep to that, you must hold the real things, or archetypes of our ideas, are not perceived by sense, but by some internal faculty of the soul, as reason or memory. I would therefore fain know what arguments you can draw from reason for the existence of what you call REAL THINGS OR MATERIAL OBJECTS. Or, whether you remember to have seen them formerly as they are in themselves; or, if you have heard or read of any one that did.

HYLAS: I see, Philonous, you are disposed to raillery; but that will never convince me.

PHILONOUS: My aim is only to learn from you the way to come at the knowledge of MATERIAL BEINGS. Whatever we perceive is perceived immediately or mediately: by sense, or by reason and reflection. But, as you have excluded sense, pray shew me what reason you have to believe their existence; or what MEDIUM you can possibly

make use of to prove it, either to mine or your own understanding.

HYLAS: To deal ingenuously, Philonous, now I consider the point, I do not find I can give you any good reason for it. But, thus much seems pretty plain, that it is at least possible such things may really exist. And, as long as there is no absurdity in supposing them, I am resolved to believe as I did, till you bring good reasons to the contrary.

PHILONOUS: What! Is it come to this, that you only BELIEVE the existence of material objects, and that your belief is founded barely on the possibility of its being true? Then you will have me bring reasons against it: though another would think it reasonable the proof should lie on him who holds the affirmative. And, after all, this very point which you are now resolved to maintain, without any reason, is in effect what you have more than once during this discourse seen good reason to give up. But, to pass over all this; if I understand you rightly, you say our ideas do not exist without the mind, but that they are copies, images, or representations, of certain originals that do?

HYLAS: You take me right.

PHILONOUS: They are then like external things?

HYLAS: They are.

PHILONOUS: Have those things a stable and permanent nature, independent of our senses; or are they in a perpetual change, upon our producing any motions in our bodies—suspending, exerting, or altering, our faculties or organs of sense?

HYLAS: Real things, it is plain, have a fixed and real nature, which remains the same notwithstanding any change in our senses, or in the posture and motion of our bodies; which indeed may affect the ideas in our minds, but it were absurd to think they had the same effect on things existing without the mind.

PHILONOUS: How then is it possible that things perpetually fleeting and variable as our ideas should be copies or images of anything fixed and constant? Or, in other words, since all sensible qualities, as size, figure, color, c., that is, our ideas, are continually changing, upon every alteration in the distance, medium, or instruments of sensation; how can any determinate material objects be properly represented or painted forth by several distinct things, each of which is so different from and unlike the rest? Or, if you say it resembles someone only of our ideas, how shall we be able

to distinguish the true copy from all the false ones?

HYLAS: I profess, Philonous, I am at a loss. I know not what to say to this.

PHILONOUS: But neither is this all. Which are material objects in themselves—perceptible or imperceptible?

HYLAS: Properly and immediately nothing can be perceived but ideas. All material things, therefore, are in themselves insensible, and to be perceived only by our ideas.

PHILONOUS: Ideas then are sensible, and their archetypes or originals insensible?

HYLAS: Right.

PHILONOUS: But how can that which is sensible be like that which is insensible? Can a real thing, in itself INVISIBLE, be like a COLOUR; or a real thing, which is not AUDIBLE, be like a SOUND? In a word, can anything be like a sensation or idea, but another sensation or idea?

HYLAS: I must own, I think not.

PHILONOUS: Is it possible there should be any doubt on the point? Do. you not perfectly know your own ideas?

HYLAS: I know them perfectly; since what I do not perceive or know can be no part of my idea.

PHILONOUS: Consider, therefore, and examine them, and then tell me if there be anything in them which can exist without the mind: or if you can conceive anything like them existing without the mind.

HYLAS: Upon inquiry, I find it is impossible for me to conceive or understand how anything but an idea can be like an idea. And it is most evident that NO IDEA CAN EXIST WITHOUT THE MIND.

PHILONOUS: You are therefore, by your principles, forced to deny the REALITY of sensible things; since you made it to consist in an absolute existence exterior to the mind. That is to say, you are a downright sceptic. So, I have gained my point, which was to shew your principles led to Skepticism.

HYLAS: For the present I am, if not entirely convinced, at least silenced.

PHILONOUS: I would fain know what more you would require in order to a perfect conviction. Have you not had the liberty of explaining yourself all manner of ways? Were any little slips in discourse laid hold and insisted on? Or were you not allowed to retract or reinforce anything you had offered, as best served your purpose? Hath not everything you could say been heard and examined with all the fairness imaginable? In a word have you not in every point been convinced out of your own mouth? And, if you can at present discover any flaw in any of your former concessions, or think of any remaining subterfuge, any new distinction, color, or comment whatsoever, why do you not produce it?

HYLAS: A little patience, Philonous. I am at present so amazed to see myself ensnared, and as it were imprisoned in the labyrinths you have drawn me into, that on the sudden it cannot be expected I should find my way out. You must give me time to look about me and recollect myself.

PHILONOUS: Hark; is not this the college bell?

HYLAS: It rings for prayers.

PHILONOUS: We will go in then, if you please, and meet here again tomorrow morning. In the meantime, you may employ your thoughts on this morning's discourse, and try if you can find any fallacy in it, or invent any new means to extricate yourself.

HYLAS: Agreed.

The Second Dialogue

HYLAS: I beg your pardon, Philonous, for not meeting you sooner. All this morning my head was so filled with our late conversation that I had not leisure to think of the time of the day, or indeed of anything else.

Philonous. I am glad you were so intent upon it, in hopes if there were any mistakes in your concessions, or fallacies in my reasonings from them, you will now discover them to me.

HYLAS: I assure you I have done nothing ever since I saw you but search after mistakes and fallacies, and, with that view, have minutely examined the whole series of yesterday's discourse: but all in vain, for the notions it led me into, upon review, appear still more clear and evident; and, the more I consider them, the more irresistibly do they force my assent.

PHILONOUS: And is not this, think you, a sign that they are genuine, that they proceed from nature, and are conformable to right reason? Truth and beauty are in this alike, that the strictest survey sets them both off to advantage; while the false luster of error and disguise cannot endure being reviewed, or too nearly inspected.

HYLAS: I own there is a great deal in what you say. Nor can anyone be more entirely satisfied of the truth of those odd consequences, so long as I have in view the reasonings that lead to them. But, when these are out of my thoughts, there seems, on the other hand, something so satisfactory, so natural and intelligible, in the modern way of explaining things that, I profess, I know not how to reject it.

PHILONOUS: I know not what way you mean.

HYLAS: I mean the way of accounting for our sensations or ideas.

PHILONOUS: How is that?

HYLAS: It is supposed the soul makes her residence in some part of the brain, from which the nerves take their rise, and are thence extended to all parts of the body; and that outward objects, by the different impressions they make on the organs of sense, communicate certain vibrative motions to the nerves; and these being filled with spirits propagate them to the brain or seat of the soul, which, according to the various impressions or traces thereby made in the brain, is variously affected with ideas.

PHILONOUS: And call you this an explication of the manner whereby we are affected with ideas?

HYLAS: Why not, Philonous? Have you anything to object against it?

PHILONOUS: I would first know whether I rightly understand your hypothesis. You make certain traces in the brain to be the causes or occasions of our ideas. Pray tell me whether by the BRAIN you mean any sensible thing.

HYLAS: What else think you I could mean?

PHILONOUS: Sensible things are all immediately perceivable; and those things which are immediately perceivable are ideas; and these exist only in the mind. Thus much you have, if I mistake not, long since agreed to.

HYLAS: I do not deny it.

PHILONOUS: The brain therefore you speak of, being a sensible thing, exists only in the mind. Now, I would fain know whether you think it reasonable to suppose that one idea or thing existing in the mind occasions all other ideas. And, if you think so, pray how do you account for the origin of that primary idea or brain itself?

HYLAS: I do not explain the origin of our ideas by that brain which is perceivable to sense—this being itself only a combination of sensible ideas—but by another which I imagine.

PHILONOUS: But are not things imagined as truly IN THE MIND as things perceived?

HYLAS: I must confess they are.

PHILONOUS: It comes, therefore, to the same thing; and you have been all this while accounting for ideas by certain motions or impressions of the brain; that is, by some alterations in an idea, whether sensible or imaginable it matters not.

HYLAS: I begin to suspect my hypothesis.

PHILONOUS: Besides spirits, all that we know or conceive are our own ideas. When, therefore, you say all ideas are occasioned by impressions in the brain, do you conceive this brain or no? If you do, then you talk of ideas imprinted in an idea causing that same idea, which is absurd. If you do not conceive it, you talk unintelligibly, instead of forming a reasonable hypothesis.

HYLAS: I now clearly see it was a mere dream. There is nothing in it.

PHILONOUS: You need not be much concerned at it; for after all, this way of explaining things, as you called it, could never have satisfied any reasonable man. What connection is there between a motion in the nerves, and the sensations of sound or color in the mind? Or how is it possible these should be the effect of that?

HYLAS: But I could never think it had so little in it as now it seems to have.

PHILONOUS: Well then, are you at length satisfied that no sensible things have a real existence; and that you are in truth an errant sceptic?

HYLAS: It is too plain to be denied.

PHILONOUS: Look! are not the fields covered with a delightful verdure? Is there not something in the woods and groves, in the rivers and clear springs, that soothes, that

delights, that transports the soul? At the prospect of the wide and deep ocean, or some huge mountain whose top is lost in the clouds, or of an old gloomy forest, are not our minds filled with a pleasing horror? Even in rocks and deserts is there not an agreeable wildness? How sincere a pleasure is it to behold the natural beauties of the earth! To preserve and renew our, relish for them, is not the veil of night alternately drawn over her face, and doth she not change her dress with the seasons? How aptly are the elements disposed! What variety and use in the meanest productions of nature! What delicacy, what beauty, what contrivance, in animal and vegetable bodies! How exquisitely are all things suited, as well to their particular ends, as to constitute opposite parts of the whole! And, while they mutually aid and support, do they not also set off and illustrate each other? Raise now your thoughts from this ball of earth to all those glorious luminaries that adorn the high arch of heaven. The motion and situation of the planets, are they not admirable for use and order? Were those (miscalled ERRATIC) globes once known to stray, in their repeated journeys through the pathless void? Do they not measure areas round the sun ever proportioned to the times? So fixed, so immutable are the laws by which the unseen Author of nature actuates the universe. How vivid and radiant is the luster of the fixed stars! How magnificent and rich that negligent profusion with which they appear to be scattered throughout the whole azure vault! Yet, if you take the telescope, it brings into your sight a new host of stars that escape the naked eye. Here they seem contiguous and minute, but to a nearer view immense orbs of light at various distances, far sunk in the abyss of space. Now you must call imagination to your aid. The feeble narrow sense cannot descry innumerable worlds revolving round the central fires; and in those worlds the energy of an all perfect Mind displayed in endless forms. But, neither sense nor imagination are big enough to comprehend the boundless extent, with all its glittering furniture. Though the laboring mind exert and strain each power to its utmost reach, there still stands out ungrasped a surplussage immeasurable. Yet all the vast bodies that compose this mighty frame, how distant and remote so ever, are by some secret mechanism, some Divine art and force, linked in a mutual dependence and intercourse with each other; even with this earth, which was almost slipped from my thoughts and lost in the crowd of worlds. Is not the whole system immense, beautiful, glorious beyond expression and beyond thought! What treatment, then, do those philosophers deserve, who would deprive these noble and delightful scenes of all REALITY? How should those Principles be entertained that lead us to think all the visible beauty of the creation a false imaginary glare? To be plain, can you expect this Skepticism of yours will not be thought extravagantly absurd by all men of sense?

HYLAS: Other men may think as they please; but for your part you have nothing to

reproach me with. My comfort is, you are as much a sceptic as I am.

PHILONOUS: There, Hylas, I must beg leave to differ from you.

HYLAS: What! Have you all along agreed to the premises, and do you now deny the conclusion, and leave me to maintain those paradoxes by myself which you led me into? This surely is not fair.

PHILONOUS: _I_ deny that I agreed with you in those notions that led to Skepticism. You indeed said the REALITY of sensible things consisted in AN ABSOLUTE EXISTENCE OUT OF THE MINDS OF SPIRITS, or distinct from their being perceived. And pursuant to this notion of reality, YOU are obliged to deny sensible things any real existence: that is, according to your own definition, you profess yourself a sceptic. But I neither said nor thought the reality of sensible things was to be defined after that manner. To me it is evident for the reasons you allow of, that sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in a mind or spirit. Whence I conclude, not that they have no real existence, but that, seeing they depend not on my thought, and have all existence distinct from being perceived by me, THERE MUST BE SOME OTHER MIND WHEREIN THEY EXIST. As sure, therefore, as the sensible world really exists, so sure is there an infinite omnipresent Spirit who contains and supports it.

HYLAS: What! This is no more than I and all Christians hold; nay, and all others too who believe there is a God, and that He knows and comprehends all things.

PHILONOUS: Aye, but here lies the difference. Men commonly believe that all things are known or perceived by God, because they believe the being of a God; whereas I, on the other side, immediately and necessarily conclude the being of a God, because all sensible things must be perceived by Him.

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On Radical Skepticism and Radical Empiricism – David Hume

From *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* by David Hume

Sect. IV. Sceptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding

PART I.

All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, to wit, Relations of Ideas, and Matters of Fact. Of the first kind are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain. That the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the two sides, is a proposition which expresses a relation between these figures. That three times five is equal to the half of thirty, expresses a relation between these numbers. Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would for ever retain their certainty and evidence.

Matters of fact, which are the second objects of human reason, are not ascertained in the same manner; nor is our evidence of their truth, however great, of a like nature with the foregoing. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible; because it can never imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if ever so conformable to reality. That the sun will not rise tomorrow is no less intelligible a proposition, and implies no more contradiction than the affirmation, that it will rise. We should in vain, therefore, attempt to demonstrate its falsehood. Were it demonstratively false, it would imply a contradiction, and could never be distinctly conceived by the mind.

It may, therefore, be a subject worthy of curiosity, to enquire what is the nature of that evidence which assures us of any real existence and matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory. This part of philosophy, it is observable, has been little cultivated, either by the ancients or moderns; and therefore, our doubts and errors, in the prosecution of so important an enquiry, may be the more excusable; while we march through such difficult paths without any guide or direction. They may even prove useful, by exciting curiosity, and destroying that implicit faith and security, which is the bane of all reasoning and free enquiry. The discovery of defects in

the common philosophy, if any such there be, will not, I presume, be a discouragement, but rather an incitement, as is usual, to attempt something more full and satisfactory than has yet been proposed to the public.

All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of Cause and Effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses. If you were to ask a man, why he believes any matter of fact, which is absent; for instance, that his friend is in the country, or in France; he would give you a reason; and this reason would be some other fact; as a letter received from him, or the knowledge of his former resolutions and promises. A man finding a watch or any other machine in a desert island, would conclude that there had once been men in that island. All our reasonings concerning fact are of the same nature. And here it is constantly supposed that there is a connection between the present fact and that which is inferred from it. Were there nothing to bind them together, the inference would be entirely precarious. The hearing of an articulate voice and rational discourse in the dark assures us of the presence of some person: Why? because these are the effects of the human make and fabric, and closely connected with it. If we anatomize all the other reasonings of this nature, we shall find that they are founded on the relation of cause and effect, and that this relation is either near or remote, direct or collateral. Heat and light are collateral effects of fire, and the one effect may justly be inferred from the other.

If we would satisfy ourselves, therefore, concerning the nature of that evidence, which assures us of matters of fact, we must enquire how we arrive at the knowledge of cause and effect.

I shall venture to affirm, as a general proposition, which admits of no exception, that the knowledge of this relation is not, in any instance, attained by reasonings a priori; but arises entirely from experience, when we find that any particular objects are constantly conjoined with each other. Let an object be presented to a man of ever so strong natural reason and abilities; if that object be entirely new to him, he will not be able, by the most accurate examination of its sensible qualities, to discover any of its causes or effects. Adam, though his rational faculties be supposed, at the very first, entirely perfect, could not have inferred from the fluidity and transparency of water that it would suffocate him, or from the light and warmth of fire that it would consume him. No object ever discovers, by the qualities which appear to the senses, either the causes which produced it, or the effects which will arise from it; nor can our reason, unassisted by experience, ever draw any inference concerning real existence and matter of fact.

This proposition, that causes and effects are discoverable, not by reason but by experience, will readily be admitted with regard to such objects, as we remember to have

once been altogether unknown to us; since we must be conscious of the utter inability, which we then lay under, of foretelling what would arise from them. Present two smooth pieces of marble to a man who has no tincture of natural philosophy; he will never discover that they will adhere together in such a manner as to require great force to separate them in a direct line, while they make so small a resistance to a lateral pressure. Such events, as bear little analogy to the common course of nature, are also readily confessed to be known only by experience; nor does any man imagine that the explosion of gunpowder, or the attraction of a loadstone, could ever be discovered by arguments *a priori*. In like manner, when an effect is supposed to depend upon an intricate machinery or secret structure of parts, we make no difficulty in attributing all our knowledge of it to experience. Who will assert that he can give the ultimate reason, why milk or bread is proper nourishment for a man, not for a lion or a tiger?

But the same truth may not appear, at first sight, to have the same evidence with regard to events, which have become familiar to us from our first appearance in the world, which bear a close analogy to the whole course of nature, and which are supposed to depend on the simple qualities of objects, without any secret structure of parts. We are apt to imagine that we could discover these effects by the mere operation of our reason, without experience. We fancy, that were we brought on a sudden into this world, we could at first have inferred that one billiard ball would communicate motion to another upon impulse; and that we needed not to have waited for the event, in order to pronounce with certainty concerning it. Such is the influence of custom, that, where it is strongest, it not only covers our natural ignorance, but even conceals itself, and seems not to take place, merely because it is found in the highest degree.

But to convince us that all the laws of nature, and all the operations of bodies without exception, are known only by experience, the following reflections may, perhaps, suffice. Were any object presented to us, and were we required to pronounce concerning the effect, which will result from it, without consulting past observation; after what manner, I beseech you, must the mind proceed in this operation? It must invent or imagine some event, which it ascribes to the object as its effect; and it is plain that this invention must be entirely arbitrary. The mind can never possibly find the effect in the supposed cause, by the most accurate scrutiny and examination. For the effect is totally different from the cause, and consequently can never be discovered in it. Motion in the second billiard ball is a quite distinct event from motion in the first; nor is there anything in the one to suggest the smallest hint of the other. A stone or piece of metal raised into the air, and left without any support, immediately falls: but to consider the matter *a priori*, is there anything we discover in this situation which can beget the idea of a downward, rather than an upward, or any other motion, in the stone or metal?

And as the first imagination or invention of a particular effect, in all natural operations, is arbitrary, where we consult not experience; so must we also esteem the supposed tie or connection between the cause and effect, which binds them together, and renders it impossible that any other effect could result from the operation of that cause. When I see, for instance, a billiard ball moving in a straight line towards another; even suppose motion in the second ball should by accident be suggested to me, as the result of their contact or impulse; may I not conceive, that a hundred different events might as well follow from that cause? May not both these balls remain at absolute rest? May not the first ball return in a straight line, or leap off from the second in any line or direction? All these suppositions are consistent and conceivable. Why then should we give the preference to one, which is no more consistent or conceivable than the rest? All our reasonings a priori will never be able to show us any foundation for this preference.

In a word, then, every effect is a distinct event from its cause. It could not, therefore, be discovered in the cause, and the first invention or conception of it, a priori, must be entirely arbitrary. And even after it is suggested, the conjunction of it with the cause must appear equally arbitrary; since there are always many other effects, which, to reason, must seem fully as consistent and natural. In vain, therefore, should we pretend to determine any single event, or infer any cause or effect, without the assistance of observation and experience.

Hence, we may discover the reason why no philosopher, who is rational and modest, has ever pretended to assign the ultimate cause of any natural operation, or to show distinctly the action of that power, which produces any single effect in the universe. It is confessed, that the utmost effort of human reason is to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a few general causes, by means of reasonings from analogy, experience, and observation. But as to the causes of these general causes, we should in vain attempt their discovery; nor shall we ever be able to satisfy ourselves, by any particular explication of them. These ultimate springs and principles are totally shut up from human curiosity and enquiry. Elasticity, gravity, cohesion of parts, communication of motion by impulse; these are probably the ultimate causes and principles which we shall ever discover in nature; and we may esteem ourselves sufficiently happy, if, by accurate enquiry and reasoning, we can trace up the particular phenomena to, or near to, these general principles. The most perfect philosophy of the natural kind only staves off our ignorance a little longer: as perhaps the most perfect philosophy of the moral or metaphysical kind serves only to discover larger portions of it. Thus, the observation of human blindness and weakness is the result of all philosophy, and meets us at every turn, in spite of our endeavors to elude or avoid it.

Nor is geometry, when taken into the assistance of natural philosophy, ever able to remedy this defect, or lead us into the knowledge of ultimate causes, by all that accuracy of reasoning for which it is so justly celebrated. Every part of mixed mathematics proceeds upon the supposition that certain laws are established by nature in her operations; and abstract reasonings are employed, either to assist experience in the discovery of these laws, or to determine their influence in particular instances, where it depends upon any precise degree of distance and quantity. Thus, it is a law of motion, discovered by experience, that the moment or force of any body in motion is in the compound ratio or proportion of its solid contents and its velocity; and consequently, that a small force may remove the greatest obstacle or raise the greatest weight, if, by any contrivance or machinery, we can increase the velocity of that force, so as to make it an overmatch for its antagonist. Geometry assists us in the application of this law, by giving us the just dimensions of all the parts and figures which can enter into any species of machine; but still the discovery of the law itself is owing merely to experience, and all the abstract reasonings in the world could never lead us one step towards the knowledge of it. When we reason a priori, and consider merely any object or cause, as it appears to the mind, independent of all observation, it never could suggest to us the notion of any distinct object, such as its effect; much less, show us the inseparable and inviolable connection between them. A man must be very sagacious who could discover by reasoning that crystal is the effect of heat, and ice of cold, without being previously acquainted with the operation of these qualities.

PART II.

But we have not yet attained any tolerable satisfaction with regard to the question first proposed. Each solution still gives rise to a new question as difficult as the foregoing, and leads us on to farther enquiries. When it is asked, What is the nature of all our reasonings concerning matter of fact? the proper answer seems to be, that they are founded on the relation of cause and effect. When again it is asked, What is the foundation of all our reasonings and conclusions concerning that relation? it may be replied in one word, Experience. But if we still carry on our sifting humor, and ask, What is the foundation of all conclusions from experience? this implies a new question, which may be of more difficult solution and explication. Philosophers, that give themselves airs of superior wisdom and sufficiency, have a hard task when they encounter persons of inquisitive dispositions, who push them from every corner to which they retreat, and who are sure at last to bring them to some dangerous dilemma. The best expedient to prevent this confusion, is to be modest in our pretensions; and even to discover the difficulty ourselves before it is objected to us. By this means, we may make a kind of merit of our very ignorance.

I shall content myself, in this section, with an easy task, and shall pretend only to give a negative answer to the question here proposed. I say then, that, even after we have experience of the operations of cause and effect, our conclusions from that experience are not founded on reasoning, or any process of the understanding. This answer we must endeavor both to explain and to defend.

It must certainly be allowed, that nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles on which the influence of those objects entirely depends. Our senses inform us of the color, weight, and consistence of bread; but neither sense nor reason can ever inform us of those qualities which fit it for the nourishment and support of a human body. Sight or feeling conveys an idea of the actual motion of bodies; but as to that wonderful force or power, which would carry on a moving body for ever in a continued change of place, and which bodies never lose but by communicating it to others; of this we cannot form the most distant conception. But notwithstanding this ignorance of natural powers [6] and principles, we always presume, when we see like sensible qualities, that they have like secret powers, and expect that effects, similar to those which we have experienced, will follow from them. If a body of like color and consistence with that bread, which we have formerly eat, be presented to us, we make no scruple of repeating the experiment, and foresee, with certainty, like nourishment and support. Now this is a process of the mind or thought, of which I would willingly know the foundation. It is allowed on all hands that there is no known connection between the sensible qualities and the secret powers; and consequently, that the mind is not led to form such a conclusion concerning their constant and regular conjunction, by anything which it knows of their nature. As to past Experience, it can be allowed to give direct and certain information of those precise objects only, and that precise period of time, which fell under its cognizance: but why this experience should be extended to future times, and to other objects, which for aught we know, may be only in appearance similar; this is the main question on which I would insist. The bread, which I formerly eat, nourished me; that is, a body of such sensible qualities was, at that time, endued with such secret powers: but does it follow, that other bread must also nourish me at another time, and that like sensible qualities must always be attended with like secret powers? The consequence seems nowise necessary. At least, it must be acknowledged that there is here a consequence drawn by the mind; that there is a certain step taken; a process of thought, and an inference, which wants to be explained. These two propositions are far from being the same, I have found that such an object has always been attended with such an effect, and I foresee, that other objects, which are, in appearance, similar, will be attended with similar effects. I shall allow, if you please, that the one proposition may justly be inferred from the other: I know, in fact, that it always is

inferred. But if you insist that the inference is made by a chain of reasoning, I desire you to produce that reasoning. The connection between these propositions is not intuitive. There is required a medium, which may enable the mind to draw such an inference, if indeed it be drawn by reasoning and argument. What that medium is, I must confess, passes my comprehension; and it is incumbent on those to produce it, who assert that it really exists, and is the origin of all our conclusions concerning matter of fact.

This negative argument must certainly, in process of time, become altogether convincing, if many penetrating and able philosophers shall turn their enquiries this way and no one be ever able to discover any connecting proposition or intermediate step, which supports the understanding in this conclusion. But as the question is yet new, every reader may not trust so far to his own penetration, as to conclude, because an argument escapes his enquiry, that therefore it does not really exist. For this reason, it may be requisite to venture upon a more difficult task; and enumerating all the branches of human knowledge, endeavor to show that none of them can afford such an argument.

All reasonings may be divided into two kinds, namely, demonstrative reasoning, or that concerning relations of ideas, and moral reasoning, or that concerning matter of fact and existence. That there are no demonstrative arguments in the case seems evident; since it implies no contradiction that the course of nature may change, and that an object, seemingly like those which we have experienced, may be attended with different or contrary effects. May I not clearly and distinctly conceive that a body, falling from the clouds, and which, in all other respects, resembles snow, has yet the taste of salt or feeling of fire? Is there any more intelligible proposition than to affirm, that all the trees will flourish in December and January, and decay in May and June? Now whatever is intelligible, and can be distinctly conceived, implies no contradiction, and can never be proved false by any demonstrative argument or abstract reasoning a priori.

If we be, therefore, engaged by arguments to put trust in past experience, and make it the standard of our future judgement, these arguments must be probable only, or such as regard matter of fact and real existence, according to the division above mentioned. But that there is no argument of this kind, must appear, if our explication of that species of reasoning be admitted as solid and satisfactory. We have said that all arguments concerning existence are founded on the relation of cause and effect; that our knowledge of that relation is derived entirely from experience; and that all our experimental conclusions proceed upon the supposition that the future will be conformable to the past. To endeavor, therefore, the proof of this last supposition by probable arguments, or arguments regarding existence, must be evidently going in a circle, and taking that for granted, which is the very point in question.

In reality, all arguments from experience are founded on the similarity which we discover among natural objects, and by which we are induced to expect effects similar to those which we have found to follow from such objects. And though none but a fool or madman will ever pretend to dispute the authority of experience, or to reject that great guide of human life, it may surely be allowed a philosopher to have so much curiosity at least as to examine the principle of human nature, which gives this mighty authority to experience, and makes us draw advantage from that similarity which nature has placed among different objects. From causes which appear similar we expect similar effects. This is the sum of all our experimental conclusions. Now it seems evident that, if this conclusion were formed by reason, it would be as perfect at first, and upon one instance, as after ever so long a course of experience. But the case is far otherwise. Nothing so like as eggs; yet no one, on account of this appearing similarity, expects the same taste and relish in all of them. It is only after a long course of uniform experiments in any kind, that we attain a firm reliance and security with regard to a particular event. Now where is that process of reasoning which, from one instance, draws a conclusion, so different from that which it infers from a hundred instances that are nowise different from that single one? This question I propose as much for the sake of information, as with an intention of raising difficulties. I cannot find, I cannot imagine any such reasoning. But I keep my mind still open to instruction, if any one will vouchsafe to bestow it on me.

Should it be said that, from a number of uniform experiments, we infer a connection between the sensible qualities and the secret powers; this, I must confess, seems the same difficulty, couched in different terms. The question still recurs, on what process of argument this inference is founded? Where is the medium, the interposing ideas, which join propositions so very wide of each other? It is confessed that the color, consistence, and other sensible qualities of bread appear not, of themselves, to have any connection with the secret powers of nourishment and support. For otherwise we could infer these secret powers from the first appearance of these sensible qualities, without the aid of experience; contrary to the sentiment of all philosophers, and contrary to plain matter of fact. Here, then, is our natural state of ignorance with regard to the powers and influence of all objects. How is this remedied by experience? It only shows us a number of uniform effects, resulting from certain objects, and teaches us that those particular objects, at that particular time, were endowed with such powers and forces. When a new object, endowed with similar sensible qualities, is produced, we expect similar powers and forces, and look for a like effect. From a body of like color and consistence with bread we expect like nourishment and support. But this surely is a step or progress of the mind, which wants to be explained. When a man says, I have found, in all past instances, such sensible qualities conjoined with such secret powers; And when he says, Similar sensible qualities will always be conjoined with similar secret powers, he is not guilty of a tautology, nor are

these propositions in any respect the same. You say that the one proposition is an inference from the other. But you must confess that the inference is not intuitive; neither is it demonstrative: Of what nature is it, then? To say it is experimental, is begging the question. For all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past, and that similar powers will be conjoined with similar sensible qualities. If there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion. It is impossible, therefore, that any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of the past to the future; since all these arguments are founded on the supposition of that resemblance. Let the course of things be allowed hitherto ever so regular; that alone, without some new argument or inference, proves not that, for the future, it will continue so. In vain do you pretend to have learned the nature of bodies from your past experience. Their secret nature, and consequently all their effects and influence, may change, without any change in their sensible qualities. This happens sometimes, and with regard to some objects: Why may it not happen always, and with regard to all objects? What logic, what process of argument secures you against this supposition? My practice, you say, refutes my doubts. But you mistake the purport of my question. As an agent, I am quite satisfied in the point; but as a philosopher, who has some share of curiosity, I will not say skepticism, I want to learn the foundation of this inference. No reading, no enquiry has yet been able to remove my difficulty, or give me satisfaction in a matter of such importance. Can I do better than propose the difficulty to the public, even though, perhaps, I have small hopes of obtaining a solution? We shall at least, by this means, be sensible of our ignorance, if we do not augment our knowledge.

I must confess that a man is guilty of unpardonable arrogance who concludes, because an argument has escaped his own investigation, that therefore it does not really exist. I must also confess that, though all the learned, for several ages, should have employed themselves in fruitless search upon any subject, it may still, perhaps, be rash to conclude positively that the subject must, therefore, pass all human comprehension. Even though we examine all the sources of our knowledge, and conclude them unfit for such a subject, there may still remain a suspicion, that the enumeration is not complete, or the examination not accurate. But with regard to the present subject, there are some considerations which seem to remove all this accusation of arrogance or suspicion of mistake.

It is certain that the most ignorant and stupid peasants nay infants, nay even brute beasts improve by experience, and learn the qualities of natural objects, by observing the effects which result from them. When a child has felt the sensation of pain from touching the flame of a candle, he will be careful not to put his hand near any candle; but will expect a

similar effect from a cause which is similar in its sensible qualities and appearance. If you assert, therefore, that the understanding of the child is led into this conclusion by any process of argument or ratiocination, I may justly require you to produce that argument; nor have you any pretense to refuse so equitable a demand. You cannot say that the argument is abstruse, and may possibly escape your enquiry; since you confess that it is obvious to the capacity of a mere infant. If you hesitate, therefore, a moment, or if, after reflection, you produce any intricate or profound argument, you, in a manner, give up the question, and confess that it is not reasoning which engages us to suppose the past resembling the future, and to expect similar effects from causes which are, to appearance, similar. This is the proposition which I intended to enforce in the present section. If I be right, I pretend not to have made any mighty discovery. And if I be wrong, I must acknowledge myself to be indeed a very backward scholar; since I cannot now discover an argument which, it seems, was perfectly familiar to me long before I was out of my cradle.

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On Transcendental Idealism – Immanuel Kant

From *The Critique of Pure Reason* by Kant.

I. Of the difference between pure and empirical knowledge.

THAT all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt. For how is it possible that the faculty of cognition should be awakened into exercise otherwise than by means of objects which affect our senses, and partly of themselves produce representations, partly rouse our powers of understanding into activity, to compare, to connect, or to separate these, and so to convert the raw material of our sensuous impressions into a knowledge of objects, which is called experience? In respect of time, therefore, no knowledge of ours is antecedent to experience, but begins with it.

But, though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience. For, on the contrary, it is quite possible that our empirical knowledge is a compound of that which we receive through impressions, and that which the faculty of cognition supplies from itself (sensuous impressions giving merely the *occasion*), an addition which we cannot distinguish from the original element given by sense, till long practice has made us attentive to, and skillful in separating it. It is, therefore, a question which requires close investigation, and not to be answered at first sight, —whether there exists a knowledge altogether independent of experience, and even of all sensuous impressions? Knowledge of this kind is called *a priori*, in contradistinction to empirical knowledge, which has its sources *a posteriori*, that is, in experience.

But the expression, “*a priori*,” is not as yet definite enough adequately to indicate the whole meaning of the question above started. For, in speaking of knowledge which has its sources in experience, we are wont to say, that this or that may be known *a priori*, because we do not derive this knowledge immediately from experience, but from a general rule, which, however, we have itself borrowed from experience. Thus, if a man undermined his house, we say, “he might know *a priori* that it would have fallen;” that is, he needed not to have waited for the experience that it did actually fall. But still, *a priori*, he could not know even this much. For, that bodies are heavy, and, consequently, that they fall when their supports are taken away, must have been known to him previously, by means of experience.

By the term “knowledge *a priori*,” therefore, we shall in the sequel understand, not such as is independent of this or that kind of experience, but such as is absolutely so of *all* experience. Opposed to this is empirical knowledge, or that which is possible only *a posteriori*, that is, through experience. Knowledge *a priori* is either pure or impure. Pure knowledge *a priori* is that with which no empirical element is mixed up. For example, the proposition, “Every change has a cause,” is a proposition *a priori*, but impure, because change is a conception which can only be derived from experience.

II. The human intellect, even in an unphilosophical state, is in possession of certain cognitions *a priori*.

THE question now is as to a *criterion*, by which we may securely distinguish a pure from an empirical cognition. Experience no doubt teaches us that this or that object is constituted in such and such a manner, but not that it could not possibly exist otherwise. Now, in the first place, if we have a proposition which contains the idea of necessity in its very conception, it is a judgment *a priori*; if, moreover, it is not derived from any other proposition, unless from one equally involving the idea of necessity, it is absolutely *a*

priori. Secondly, an empirical judgment never exhibits strict and absolute, but only assumed and comparative universality (by induction); therefore, the most we can say is, —so far as we have hitherto observed, there is no exception to this or that rule. If, on the other hand, a judgment carries with it strict and absolute universality, that is, admits of no possible exception, it is not derived from experience, but is valid absolutely *a priori*.

Empirical universality is, therefore, only an arbitrary extension of validity, from that which may be predicated of a proposition valid in most cases, to that which is asserted of a proposition which holds good in all; as, for example, in the affirmation, “All bodies are heavy.” When, on the contrary, strict universality characterizes a judgment, it necessarily indicates another peculiar source of knowledge, namely, a faculty of cognition *a priori*. Necessity and strict universality, therefore, are infallible tests for distinguishing pure from empirical knowledge, and are inseparably connected with each other. But as in the use of these criteria the empirical limitation is sometimes more easily detected than the contingency of the judgment, or the unlimited universality which we attach to a judgment is often a more convincing proof than its necessity, it may be advisable to use the criteria separately, each being by itself infallible.

Now, that in the sphere of human cognition we have judgments which are necessary, and in the strictest sense universal, consequently pure *a priori*, it will be an easy matter to show. If we desire an example from the sciences, we need only take any proposition in mathematics. If we cast our eyes upon the commonest operations of the understanding, the proposition, “every change must have a cause,” will amply serve our purpose. In the latter case, indeed, the conception of a cause so plainly involves the conception of a necessity of connection with an effect, and of a strict universality of the law, that the very notion of a cause would entirely disappear, were we to derive it, like Hume, from a frequent association of what happens with that which precedes; and the habit thence originating of connecting representations—the necessity inherent in the judgment being therefore merely subjective. Besides, without seeking for such examples of principles existing *a priori* in cognition, we might easily show that such principles are the indispensable basis of the possibility of experience itself, and consequently prove their existence *a priori*. For whence could our experience itself acquire certainty, if all the rules on which it depends were themselves empirical, and consequently fortuitous? No one, therefore, can admit the validity of the use of such rules as first principles. But, for the present, we may content ourselves with having established the fact, that we do possess and exercise a faculty of pure *a priori* cognition; and, secondly, with having pointed out the proper tests of such cognition, namely, universality and necessity.

Not only in judgments, however, but even in conceptions, is an *a priori* origin manifest.

For example, if we take away by degrees from our conceptions of a body all that can be referred to mere sensuous experience—color, hardness or softness, weight, even impenetrability—the body will then vanish; but the space which it occupied still remains, and this it is utterly impossible to annihilate in thought. Again, if we take away, in like manner, from our empirical conception of any object, corporeal or incorporeal, all properties which mere experience has taught us to connect with it, still we cannot think away those through which we cogitate it as substance, or adhering to substance, although our conception of substance is more determined than that of an object. Compelled, therefore, by that necessity with which the conception of substance forces itself upon us, we must confess that it has its seat in our faculty of cognition *a priori*.

III. Philosophy stands in need of a science which shall determine the possibility, principles, and extent of human knowledge *a priori*

OF far more importance than all that has been above said, is the consideration that certain of our cognitions rise completely above the sphere of all possible experience, and by means of conceptions, to which there exists in the whole extent of experience no corresponding object, seem to extend the range of our judgments beyond its bounds. And just in this transcendental or supersensible sphere, where experience affords us neither instruction nor guidance, lie the investigations of *Reason*, which, on account of their importance, we consider far preferable to, and as having a far more elevated aim than, all that the understanding can achieve within the sphere of sensuous phenomena. So high a value do we set upon these investigations, that even at the risk of error, we persist in following them out, and permit neither doubt nor disregard nor indifference to restrain us from the pursuit. These unavoidable problems of mere pure reason are GOD, FREEDOM (of will), and IMMORTALITY. The science which, with all its preliminaries, has for its especial object the solution of these problems is named metaphysics—a science which is at the very outset dogmatical, that is, it confidently takes upon itself the execution of this task without any previous investigation of the ability or inability of reason for such an undertaking.

Now the safe ground of experience being thus abandoned, it seems nevertheless natural that we should hesitate to erect a building with the cognitions we possess, without knowing whence they come, and on the strength of principles, the origin of which is undiscovered. Instead of thus trying to build without a foundation, it is rather to be expected that we should long ago have put the question, how the understanding can arrive at these *a priori* cognitions, and what is the extent, validity, and worth which they may possess? We say, this is natural enough, meaning by the word natural, that which is consistent with a just and reasonable way of thinking; but if we understand by the term,

that which usually happens, nothing indeed could be more natural and more comprehensible than that this investigation should be left long unattempted. For one part of our pure knowledge, the science of mathematics, has been long firmly established, and thus leads us to form flattering expectations with regard to others, though these may be of quite a different nature. Besides, when we get beyond the bounds of experience, we are of course safe from opposition in that quarter; and the charm of widening the range of our knowledge is so great that, unless we are brought to a standstill by some evident contradiction, we hurry on undoubtingly in our course. This, however, may be avoided, if we are sufficiently cautious in the construction of our fictions, which are not the less fictions on that account.

Mathematical science affords us a brilliant example, how far, independently of all experience, we may carry our *a priori* knowledge. It is true that the mathematician occupies himself with objects and cognitions only in so far as they can be represented by means of intuition. But this circumstance is easily overlooked, because the said intuition can itself be given *a priori*, and therefore is hardly to be distinguished from a mere pure conception. Deceived by such a proof of the power of reason, we can perceive no limits to the extension of our knowledge. The light dove cleaving in free flight the thin air, whose resistance it feels, might imagine that her movements would be far more free and rapid in airless space. Just in the same way did Plato, abandoning the world of sense because of the narrow limits it sets to the understanding, venture upon the wings of ideas beyond it, into the void space of pure intellect. He did not reflect that he made no real progress by all his efforts; for he met with no resistance which might serve him for a support, as it were, whereon to rest, and on which he might apply his powers, in order to let the intellect acquire momentum for its progress. It is, indeed, the common fate of human reason in speculation, to finish the imposing edifice of thought as rapidly as possible, and then for the first time to begin to examine whether the foundation is a solid one or no. Arrived at this point, all sorts of excuses are sought after, in order to console us for its want of stability, or rather, indeed, to enable us to dispense altogether with so late and dangerous an investigation. But what frees us during the process of building from all apprehension or suspicion, and flatters us into the belief of its solidity, is this. A great part, perhaps the greatest part, of the business of our reason consists in the analyzation of the conceptions which we already possess of objects. By this means we gain a multitude of cognitions, which although really nothing more than elucidations or explanations of that which (though in a confused manner) was already thought in our conceptions, are, at least in respect of their form, prized as new introspections; whilst, so far as regards their matter or content, we have really made no addition to our conceptions, but only dis-involved them. But as this process does furnish real *a priori* knowledge, which has a sure progress and useful results, reason, deceived by this, slips in, without being itself aware of

it, assertions of a quite different kind; in which, to given conceptions it adds others, *a priori* indeed, but entirely foreign to them, without our knowing how it arrives at these, and, indeed, without such a question ever suggesting itself. I shall therefore at once proceed to examine the difference between these two modes of knowledge.

IV. Of the difference between analytical and synthetical judgments.

IN all judgments wherein the relation of a subject to the predicate is cogitated (I mention affirmative judgments only here; the application to negative will be very easy), this relation is possible in two different ways. Either the predicate B belongs to the subject A, as somewhat which is contained (though covertly) in the conception A; or the predicate B lies completely out of the conception A, although it stands in connection with it. In the first instance, I term the judgment analytical, in the second, synthetical. Analytical judgments (affirmative) are therefore those in which the connection of the predicate with the subject is cogitated through identity; those in which this connection is cogitated without identity, are called synthetical judgments. The former may be called *explicative*, the latter *augmentative* [1] judgments; because the former add in the predicate nothing to the conception of the subject, but only analyses it into its constituent conceptions, which were thought already in the subject, although in a confused manner; the latter add to our conceptions of the subject a predicate which was not contained in it, and which no analysis could ever have discovered therein. For example, when I say, “all bodies are extended,” this is an analytical judgment. For I need not go beyond the conception of *body* in order to find extension connected with it, but merely analyze the conception, that is, become conscious of the manifold properties which I think in that conception, in order to discover this predicate in it: it is therefore an analytical judgment. On the other hand, when I say, “all bodies are heavy,” the predicate is something totally different from that which I think in the mere conception of a body. By the addition of such a predicate, therefore, it becomes a synthetical judgment.

Judgments of experience, as such, are always synthetical. For it would be absurd to think of grounding an analytical judgment on experience, because in forming such a judgment I need not go out of the sphere of my conceptions, and therefore recourse to the testimony of experience is quite unnecessary. That “bodies are extended” is not an empirical judgment, but a proposition which stands firm *a priori*. For before addressing myself to experience, I already have in my conception all the requisite conditions for the judgment, and I have only to extract the predicate from the conception, according to the principle of contradiction, and thereby at the same time become conscious of the necessity of the judgment, a necessity which I could never learn from experience. On the other hand, though at first I do not at all include the predicate of weight in my conception of body in

general, that conception still indicates an object of experience, a part of the totality of experience, to which I can still add other parts; and this I do when I recognize by observation that bodies are heavy. I can cognize beforehand by analysis the conception of body through the characteristics of extension, impenetrability, shape, etc., all which are cogitated in this conception. But now I extend my knowledge, and looking back on experience from which I had derived this conception of body, I find weight at all times connected with the above characteristics, and therefore I synthetically add to my conceptions this as a predicate, and say, “all bodies are heavy.” Thus, it is experience upon which rests the possibility of the synthesis of the predicate of weight with the conception of body, because both conceptions, although the one is not contained in the other, still belong to one another (only contingently, however), as parts of a whole, namely, of experience, which is itself a synthesis of intuitions.

But to synthetical judgments *a priori*, such aid is entirely wanting. If I go out of and beyond the conception A, in order to recognize another B as connected with it, what foundation have I to rest on, whereby to render the synthesis possible? I have here no longer the advantage of looking out in the sphere of experience for what I want. Let us take, for example, the proposition, “everything that happens has a cause.” In the conception of *something that happens*, I indeed think an existence which a certain time antecedes, and from this I can derive analytical judgments. But the conception of a cause lies quite out of the above conception, and indicates something entirely different from “that which happens,” and is consequently not contained in that conception. How then am I able to assert concerning the general conception— “that which happens”— something entirely different from that conception, and to recognize the conception of cause although not contained in it, yet as belonging to it, and even necessarily? what is here the unknown = X, upon which the understanding rests when it believes it has found, out of the conception A a foreign predicate B, which it nevertheless considers to be connected with it? It cannot be experience, because the principle adduced annexes the two representations, cause and effect, to the representation existence, not only with universality, which experience cannot give, but also with the expression of necessity, therefore completely *a priori* and from pure conceptions. Upon such synthetical, that is augmentative propositions, depends the whole aim of our speculative knowledge *a priori*; for although analytical judgments are indeed highly important and necessary, they are so, only to arrive at that clearness of conceptions which is requisite for a sure and extended synthesis, and this alone is a real acquisition.

V. In all theoretical sciences of reason, synthetical judgments; *a priori* are contained as principles.

MATHEMATICAL judgments are always synthetical. Hitherto this fact, though incontestably true and very important in its consequences, seems to have escaped the analysts of the human mind, nay, to be in complete opposition to all their conjectures. For as it was found that mathematical conclusions all proceed according to the principle of contradiction (which the nature of every apodeictic certainty requires), people became persuaded that the fundamental principles of the science also were recognized and admitted in the same way. But the notion is fallacious; for although a synthetical proposition can certainly be discerned by means of the principle of contradiction, this is possible only when another synthetical proposition precedes, from which the latter is deduced, but never of itself.

Before all, be it observed, that proper mathematical propositions are always judgments *a priori*, and not empirical, because they carry along with them the conception of necessity, which cannot be given by experience. If this be demurred to, it matters not; I will then limit my assertion to *pure* mathematics, the very conception of which implies that it consists of knowledge altogether non-empirical and *a priori*.

We might, indeed at first suppose that the proposition $7 + 5 = 12$ is a merely analytical proposition, following (according to the principle of contradiction) from the conception of a sum of seven and five. But if we regard it more narrowly, we find that our conception of the sum of seven and five contains nothing more than the uniting of both sums into one, whereby it cannot at all be cogitated what this single number is which embraces both. The conception of twelve is by no means obtained by merely cogitating the union of seven and five; and we may analyze our conception of such a possible sum as long as we will, still we shall never discover in it the notion of twelve. We must go beyond these conceptions, and have recourse to an intuition which corresponds to one of the two, —our five fingers, for example, or like Segner in his “Arithmetic,” five points, and so by degrees, add the units contained in the five given in the intuition, to the conception of seven. For I first take the number 7, and, for the conception of 5 calling in the aid of the fingers of my hand as objects of intuition, I add the units, which I before took together to make up the number 5, gradually now by means of the material image my hand, to the number 7, and by this process, I at length see the number 12 arise. That 7 should be added to 5, I have certainly cogitated in my conception of a sum $= 7 + 5$, but not that this sum was equal to 12. Arithmetical propositions are therefore always synthetical, of which we may become more clearly convinced by trying large numbers. For it will thus become quite evident that, turn and twist our conceptions as we may, it is impossible, without having recourse to intuition, to arrive at the sum total or product by means of the mere analysis of our conceptions. Just as little is any principle of pure geometry analytical. “A straight line between two points is the shortest,” is a synthetical proposition. For my conception of

straight, contains no notion of *quantity*, but is merely *qualitative*. The conception of the *shortest* is therefore fore wholly an addition, and by no analysis can it be extracted from our conception of a straight line. Intuition must therefore here lend its aid, by means of which, and thus only, our synthesis is possible.

Some few principles pre-positd by geometricians are, indeed, really analytical, and depend on the principle of contradiction. They serve, however, like identical propositions, as links in the chain of method, not as principles, —for example, $a = a$, the whole is equal to itself, or $(a + b) > a$, the whole is greater than its part. And yet even these principles themselves, though they derive their validity from pure conceptions, are only admitted in mathematics because they can be presented in intuition. What causes us here commonly to believe that the predicate of such apodeictic judgments is already contained in our conception, and that the judgment is therefore analytical, is merely the equivocal nature of the expression. We must join in thought a certain predicate to a given conception, and this necessity cleaves already to the conception. But the question is, not what we must join in thought to the given conception, but what we really think therein, though only obscurely, and then it becomes manifest that the predicate pertains to these conceptions, necessarily indeed, yet not as thought in the conception itself, but by virtue of an intuition, which must be added to the conception.

The science of Natural Philosophy (Physics) contains in itself synthetical judgments *a priori*, as principles. I shall adduce two propositions. For instance, the proposition, “in all changes of the material world, the quantity of matter remains unchanged;” or, that, “in all communication of motion, action and reaction must always be equal.” In both of these, not only is the necessity, and therefore their origin *a priori* clear, but also that they are synthetical propositions. For in the conception of matter, I do not cogitate its permanency, but merely its presence in space, which it fills. I therefore really go out of and beyond the conception of matter, in order to think on to it something *a priori*, which I did not think in it. The proposition is therefore not analytical, but synthetical, and nevertheless conceived *a priori*; and so it is with regard to the other propositions of the pure part of natural philosophy.

As to metaphysics, even if we look upon it merely as an attempted science, yet, from the nature of human reason, an indispensable one, we find that it must contain synthetical propositions *a priori*. It is not merely the duty of metaphysics to dissect, and thereby analytically to illustrate the conceptions which we form *a priori* of things; but we seek to widen the range of our *a priori* knowledge. For this purpose, we must avail ourselves of such principles as add something to the original conception—something not identical with, nor contained in it, and by means of synthetical judgments *a priori*, leave far behind

us the limits of experience; for example, in the proposition, “the world must have a beginning,” and such like. Thus metaphysics, according to the proper aim of the science, consists merely of synthetical propositions *a priori*.

VI. The universal problem of pure reason.

IT is extremely advantageous to be able to bring a number of investigations under the formula of a single problem. For in this manner, we not only facilitate our own labor, inasmuch as we define it clearly to ourselves, but also render it more easy for others to decide whether we have done justice to our undertaking. The proper problem of pure reason, then, is contained in the question: “How are synthetical judgments *a priori* possible?”

That metaphysical science has hitherto remained in so vacillating a state of uncertainty and contradiction, is only to be attributed to the fact that this great problem, and perhaps even the difference between analytical and synthetical judgments, did not sooner suggest itself to philosophers. Upon the solution of this problem, or upon sufficient proof of the impossibility of synthetical knowledge *a priori*, depends the existence or downfall of the science of metaphysics. Among philosophers, David Hume came the nearest of all to this problem; yet it never acquired in his mind sufficient precision, nor did he regard the question in its universality. On the contrary, he stopped short at the synthetical proposition of the connection of an effect with its cause (*principium causalitatis*), insisting that such proposition *a priori* was impossible. According to his conclusions, then, all that we term metaphysical science is a mere delusion, arising from the fancied insight of reason into that which is in truth borrowed from experience, and to which habit has given the appearance of necessity. Against this assertion, destructive to all pure philosophy, he would have been guarded, had he had our problem before his eyes in its universality. For he would then have perceived that, according to his own argument, there likewise could not be any pure mathematical science, which assuredly cannot exist without synthetical propositions *a priori*, —an absurdity from which his good understanding must have saved him.

In the solution of the above problem is at the same time comprehended the possibility of the use of pure reason in the foundation and construction of all sciences which contain theoretical knowledge *a priori* of objects, that is to say, the answer to the following questions:

How is pure mathematical science possible?

How is pure natural science possible?

Respecting these sciences, as they do certainly exist, it may with propriety be asked, *how* they are possible?—for that they must be possible is shown by the fact of their really existing.[2] But as to metaphysics, the miserable progress it has hitherto made, and the fact that of no one system yet brought forward, far as regards its true aim, can it be said that this science really exists, leaves any one at liberty to doubt with reason the very possibility of its existence.

Yet, in a certain sense, this kind of knowledge must unquestionably be looked upon as *given*; in other words, metaphysics must be considered as really existing, if not as a science, nevertheless as a natural disposition of the human mind (*metaphysica naturalis*). For human reason, without any instigations imputable to the mere vanity of great knowledge, unceasingly progresses, urged on by its own feeling of need, towards such questions as cannot be answered by any empirical application of reason, or principles derived therefrom; and so there has ever really existed in every man some system of metaphysics. It will always exist, so soon as reason awakes to the exercise of its power of speculation. And now the question arises—How is metaphysics, as a natural disposition, possible? In other words, how, from the nature of universal human reason, do those questions arise which pure reason proposes to itself, and which it is impelled by its own feeling of need to answer as well as it can?

But as in all the attempts hitherto made to answer the questions which reason is prompted by its very nature to propose to itself, for example, whether the world had a beginning, or has existed from eternity, it has always met with unavoidable contradictions, we must not rest satisfied with the mere natural disposition of the mind to metaphysics, that is, with the existence of the faculty of pure reason, whence, indeed, some sort of metaphysical system always arises; but it must be possible to arrive at certainty in regard to the question whether we know or do not know the things of which metaphysics treats. We must be able to arrive at a decision on the subjects of its questions, or on the ability or inability of reason to form any judgment respecting them; and therefore either to extend with confidence the bounds of our pure reason, or to set strictly defined and safe limits to its action. This last question, which arises out of the above universal problem, would properly run thus: How is metaphysics possible as a science?

Thus, the critique of reason leads at last, naturally and necessarily, to science; and, on the other hand, the dogmatical use of reason without criticism leads to groundless assertions, against which others equally specious can always be set, thus ending unavoidably in skepticism.

Besides, this science cannot be of great and formidable prolixity, because it has not to do

with objects of reason, the variety of which is inexhaustible, but merely with Reason herself and her problems; problems which arise out of her own bosom, and are not proposed to her by the nature of outward things, but by her own nature. And when once Reason has previously become able completely to understand her own power in regard to objects which she meets with in experience, it will be easy to determine securely the extent and limits of her attempted application to objects beyond the confines of experience.

We may and must, therefore, regard the attempts hitherto made to establish metaphysical science dogmatically as nonexistent. For what of analysis, that is, mere dissection of conceptions, is contained in one or other, is not the aim of, but only a preparation for metaphysics proper, which has for its object the extension, by means of synthesis, of our *a priori* knowledge. And for this purpose, mere analysis is of course useless, because it only shows what is contained in these conceptions, but not how we arrive, *a priori*, at them; and this it is her duty to show, in order to be able afterwards to determine their valid use in regard to all objects of experience, to all knowledge in general. But little self-denial, indeed, is needed to give up these pretensions, seeing the undeniable, and in the dogmatic mode of procedure, inevitable contradictions of Reason with herself, have long since ruined the reputation of every system of metaphysics that has appeared up to this time. It will require more firmness to remain undeterred by difficulty from within, and opposition from without, from endeavoring, by a method quite opposed to all those hitherto followed, to further the growth and fruitfulness of a science indispensable to human reason—a science from which every branch it has borne may be cut away, but whose roots remain indestructible.

VII. Idea and division of a particular science, under the name of a Critique of Pure Reason.

FROM all that has been said, there results the idea of a particular science, which may be called the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For reason is the faculty which furnishes us with the principles of knowledge *a priori*. Hence, pure reason is the faculty which contains the principles of cognizing anything absolutely *a priori*. An Organon of pure reason would be a compendium of those principles according to which alone all pure cognitions *a priori* can be obtained. The completely extended application of such an organon would afford us a system of pure reason. As this, however, is demanding a great deal, and it is yet doubtful whether any extension of our knowledge be here possible, or, if so, in what cases; we can regard a science of the mere criticism of pure reason, its sources and limits, as the *propaedeutic* to a system of pure reason. Such a science must not be called a doctrine, but only a critique of pure reason; and its use, in regard to speculation, would be only

negative, not to enlarge the bounds of, but to purify, our reason, and to shield it against error, —which alone is no little gain. I apply the term *transcendental* to all knowledge which is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of our cognition of these objects, so far as this mode of cognition is possible *a priori*. A system of such conceptions would be called *Transcendental Philosophy*. But this, again, is still beyond the bounds of our present essay. For as such a science must contain a complete exposition not only of our synthetical *a priori*, but of our analytical *a priori* knowledge, it is of too wide a range for our present purpose, because we do not require to carry our analysis any farther than is necessary to understand, in their full extent, the principles of synthesis *a priori*, with which alone we have to do. This investigation, which we cannot properly call a doctrine, but only a transcendental critique, because it aims not at the enlargement, but at the correction and guidance, of our knowledge, and is to serve as a touchstone of the worth or worthlessness of all knowledge *a priori*, is the sole object of our present essay. Such a critique is consequently, as far as possible, a preparation for an organon; and if this new organon should be found to fail, at least for a canon of pure reason, according to which the complete system of the philosophy of pure reason, whether it extend or limit the bounds of that reason, might one day be set forth both analytically and synthetically. For that this is possible, nay, that such a system is not of so great extent as to preclude the hope of its ever being completed, is evident. For we have not here to do with the nature of outward objects, which is infinite, but solely with the mind, which judges of the nature of objects, and, again, with the mind only in respect of its cognition *a priori*. And the object of our investigations, as it is not to be sought without, but, altogether within, ourselves, cannot remain concealed, and in all probability is limited enough to be completely surveyed and fairly estimated, according to its worth or worthlessness. Still less let the reader here expect a critique of books and systems of pure reason; our present object is exclusively a critique of the faculty of pure reason itself. Only when we make this critique our foundation, do we possess a pure touchstone for estimating the philosophical value of ancient and modern writings on this subject; and without this criterion, the incompetent historian or judge decides upon and corrects the groundless assertions of others with his own, which have themselves just as little foundation.

Transcendental philosophy is the idea of a science, for which the Critique of Pure Reason must sketch the whole plan architectonically, that is, from principles, with a full guarantee for the validity and stability of all the parts which enter into the building. It is the system of all the principles of pure reason. If this Critique itself does not assume the title of transcendental philosophy, it is only because, to be a complete system, it ought to contain a full analysis of all human knowledge *a priori*. Our critique must, indeed, lay before us a complete enumeration of all the radical conceptions which constitute the said pure knowledge. But from the complete analysis of these conceptions themselves, as also

from a complete investigation of those derived from them, it abstains with reason; partly because it would be deviating from the end in view to occupy itself with this analysis, since this process is not attended with the difficulty and insecurity to be found in the synthesis, to which our critique is entirely devoted, and partly because it would be inconsistent with the unity of our plan to burden this essay with the vindication of the completeness of such an analysis and deduction, with which, after all, we have at present nothing to do. This completeness of the analysis of these radical conceptions, as well as of the deduction from the conceptions *a priori* which may be given by the analysis, we can, however, easily attain, provided only that we are in possession of all these radical conceptions, which are to serve as principles of the synthesis, and that in respect of this main purpose nothing is wanting.

To the Critique of Pure Reason, therefore, belongs all that constitutes transcendental philosophy; and it is the complete idea of transcendental philosophy, but still not the science itself; because it only proceeds so far with the analysis as is necessary to the power of judging completely of our synthetical knowledge *a priori*.

The principal thing we must attend to, in the division of the parts of a science like this, is: that no conceptions must enter it which contain aught empirical; in other words, that the knowledge *a priori* must be completely pure. Hence, although the highest principles and fundamental conceptions of morality are certainly cognitions *a priori*, yet they do not belong to transcendental philosophy; because though they certainly do not lay the conceptions of pain, pleasure, desires, inclinations, (which are all of empirical origin), at the foundation of its precepts, yet still into the conception of duty,—as an obstacle to be overcome, or as an incitement which should not be made into a motive,—these empirical conceptions must necessarily enter, in the construction of a system of pure morality. Transcendental philosophy is consequently a philosophy of the pure and merely speculative reason. For all that is practical, so far as it contains motives, relates to feelings, and these belong to empirical sources of cognition.

If we wish to divide this science from the universal point of view of a science in general, it ought to comprehend, first, a *Doctrine of the Elements*, and, secondly, a *Doctrine of the Method* of pure reason. Each of these main divisions will have its subdivisions, the separate reasons for which we cannot here particularize. Only so much seems necessary, by way of introduction of premonition, that there are two sources of human knowledge (which probably spring from a common, but to us unknown root), namely, sense and understanding. By the former, objects are *given* to us; by the latter, *thought*. So far as the faculty of sense may contain representations *a priori*, which form the conditions under which objects are given, in so far it belongs to transcendental philosophy. The

transcendental doctrine of sense must form the first part of our science of elements, because the conditions under which alone the objects of human knowledge are given must precede those under which they are thought.

Notes

1. That is, judgments which really add to, and do not merely analyze or explain the conceptions which make up the sum of our knowledge. — *Tr.*
2. As to the existence of pure natural science, or physics, perhaps many may still express doubts. But we have only to look at the different propositions which are commonly treated of at the commencement of proper (empirical) physical science—those, for example, relating to the permanence of the same quantity of matter *vis inertia*, the equality of action and reaction, c.—to be soon convinced that they form a science of pure physics, which well deserves to be separately exposed as a special science, in its whole extent, whether that be great or confined.

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On Truth and Falsehood – Bertrand Russell

From *The Problems of Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell.

OUR knowledge of truths, unlike our knowledge of things, has an opposite, namely *error*. So far as things are concerned, we may know them or not know them, but there is no positive state of mind which can be described as erroneous knowledge of things, so long, at any rate, as we confine ourselves to knowledge by acquaintance. Whatever we are acquainted with must be something: we may draw wrong inferences from our acquaintance, but the acquaintance itself cannot be deceptive. Thus there is no dualism as regards acquaintance. But as regards knowledge of truths, there is a dualism. We may believe what is false as well as what is true. We know that on very many subjects different

people hold different and incompatible opinions: hence some beliefs must be erroneous. Since erroneous beliefs are often held just as strongly as true beliefs, it becomes a difficult question how they are to be distinguished from true beliefs. How are we to know, in a given case, that our belief is not erroneous? This is a question of the very greatest difficulty, to which no completely satisfactory answer is possible. There is, however, a preliminary question which is rather less difficult, and that is: What do we *mean* by truth and falsehood? It is this preliminary question which is to be considered in this chapter.

In this chapter we are not asking how we can know whether a belief is true or false: we are asking what is meant by the question whether a belief is true or false. It is to be hoped that a clear answer to this question may help us to obtain an answer to the question what beliefs are true, but for the present we ask only “What is truth?” and “What is falsehood?” not “What beliefs are true?” and “What beliefs are false?” It is very important to keep these different questions entirely separate, since any confusion between them is sure to produce an answer which is not really applicable to either.

There are three points to observe in the attempt to discover the nature of truth, three requisites which any theory must fulfil.

- (1) Our theory of truth must be such as to admit of its opposite, falsehood. A good many philosophers have failed adequately to satisfy this condition: they have constructed theories according to which all our thinking ought to have been true, and have then had the greatest difficulty in finding a place for falsehood. In this respect our theory of belief must differ from our theory of acquaintance, since in the case of acquaintance it was not necessary to take account of any opposite.
- (2) It seems fairly evident that if there were no beliefs there could be no falsehood, and no truth either, in the sense in which truth is correlative to falsehood. If we imagine a world of mere matter, there would be no room for falsehood in such a world, and although it would contain what may be called “facts,” it would not contain any truths, in the sense in which truths are things of the same kind as falsehoods. In fact, truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs and statements: hence a world of mere matter, since it would contain no beliefs or statements, would also contain no truth or falsehood.
- (3) But, as against what we have just said, it is to be observed that the truth or falsehood of a belief always depends upon something which lies outside the belief itself. If I believe that Charles I. died on the scaffold, I believe truly, not because of any intrinsic quality of my belief, which could be discovered by merely

examining the belief, but because of an historical event which happened two and a half centuries ago. If I believe that Charles I. died in his bed, I believe falsely: no degree of vividness in my belief, or of care in arriving at it, prevents it from being false, again because of what happened long ago, and not because of any intrinsic property of my belief. Hence, although truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs, they are properties dependent upon the relations of the beliefs to other things, not upon any internal quality of the beliefs.

The third of the above requisites leads us to adopt the view—which has on the whole been commonest among philosophers— that truth consists in some form of correspondence between belief and fact. It is, however, by no means an easy matter to discover a form of correspondence to which there are no irrefutable objections. By this partly—and partly by the feeling that, if truth consists in a correspondence of thought with something outside thought, thought can never know when truth has been attained—many philosophers have been led to try to find some definition of truth which shall not consist in relation to something wholly outside belief. The most important attempt at a definition of this sort is the theory that truth consists in *coherence*. It is said that the mark of falsehood is failure to cohere in the body of our beliefs, and that it is the essence of a truth to form part of the completely rounded system which is The Truth.

There is, however, a great difficulty in this view, or rather two great difficulties. The first is that there is no reason to suppose that only *one* coherent body of beliefs is possible. It may be that, with sufficient imagination, a novelist might invent a past for the world that would perfectly fit on to what we know, and yet be quite different from the real past. In more scientific matters, it is certain that there are often two or more hypotheses which account for all the known facts on some subject, and although, in such cases, men of science endeavor to find facts which will rule out all the hypotheses except one, there is no reason why they should always succeed.

In philosophy, again, it seems not uncommon for two rival hypotheses to be both able to account for all the facts. Thus, for example, it is possible that life is one long dream, and that the outer world has only that degree of reality that the objects of dreams have; but although such a view does not seem inconsistent with known facts, there is no reason to prefer it to the commonsense view, according to which other people and things do really exist. Thus coherence as the definition of truth fails because there is no proof that there can be only one coherent system.

The other objection to this definition of truth is that it assumes the meaning of “coherence” known, whereas, in fact, “coherence” presupposes the truth of the laws of logic. Two propositions are coherent when both may be true, and are incoherent when

one at least must be false. Now in order to know whether two propositions can both be true, we must know such truths as the law of contradiction. For example, the two propositions “this tree is a beech” and “this tree is not a beech,” are not coherent, because of the law of contradiction. But if the law of contradiction itself were subjected to the test of coherence, we should find that, if we choose to suppose it false, nothing will any longer be incoherent with anything else. Thus the laws of logic supply the skeleton or framework within which the test of coherence applies, and they themselves cannot be established by this test.

For the above two reasons, coherence cannot be accepted as giving the *meaning* of truth, though it is often a most important *test* of truth after a certain amount of truth has become known.

Hence, we are driven back to *correspondence with fact* as constituting the nature of truth. It remains to define precisely what we mean by “fact,” and what is the nature of the correspondence which must subsist between belief and fact, in order that belief may be true.

In accordance with our three requisites, we have to seek a theory of truth which (1) allows truth to have an opposite, namely falsehood, (2) makes truth a property of beliefs, but (3) makes it a property wholly dependent upon the relation of the beliefs to outside things.

The necessity of allowing for falsehood makes it impossible to regard belief as a relation of the mind to a single object, which could be said to be what is believed. If belief were so regarded, we should find that, like acquaintance, it would not admit of the opposition of truth and falsehood, but would have to be always true. This may be made clear by examples. Othello believes falsely that Desdemona loves Cassio. We cannot say that this belief consists in a relation to a single object, “Desdemona’s love for Cassio,” for if there were such an object, the belief would be true. There is in fact no such object, and therefore Othello cannot have any relation to such an object. Hence his belief cannot possibly consist in a relation to this object.

It might be said that his belief is a relation to a different object, namely “that Desdemona loves Cassio”; but it is almost as difficult to suppose that there is such an object as this, when Desdemona does not love Cassio, as it was to suppose that there is “Desdemona’s love for Cassio.” Hence it will be better to seek for a theory of belief which does not make it consist in a relation of the mind to a single object.

It is common to think of relations as though they always held between *two* terms, but in fact this is not always the case. Some relations demand three terms, some four, and so on.

Take, for instance, the relation “between.” So long as only two terms come in, the relation “between” is impossible: three terms are the smallest number that render it possible. York is between London and Edinburgh; but if London and Edinburgh were the only places in the world, there could be nothing which was between one place and another. Similarly *jealousy* requires three people: there can be no such relation that does not involve three at least. Such a proposition as “A wishes B to promote C’s marriage with D” involves a relation of four terms; that is to say, A and B and C and D all come in, and the relation involved cannot be expressed otherwise than in a form involving all four. Instances might be multiplied indefinitely, but enough has been said to show that there are relations which require more than two terms before they can occur.

The relation involved in *judging* or *believing* must, if falsehood is to be duly allowed for, be taken to be a relation between several terms, not between two. When Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio, he must not have before his mind a single object, “Desdemona’s love for Cassio,” or “that Desdemona loves Cassio,” for that would require that there should be objective falsehoods, which subsist independently of any minds; and this, though not logically refutable, is a theory to be avoided if possible. Thus it is easier to account for falsehood if we take judgment to be a relation in which the mind and the various objects concerned all occur severally; that is to say, Desdemona and loving and Cassio must all be terms in the relation which subsists when Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio. This relation, therefore, is a relation of four terms, since Othello also is one of the terms of the relation. When we say that it is a relation of four terms, we do not mean that Othello has a certain relation to Desdemona, and has the same relation to loving and also to Cassio. This may be true of some other relation than believing; but believing, plainly, is not a relation which Othello has to *each* of the three terms concerned, but to *all* of them together: there is only one example of the relation of believing involved, but this one example knits together four terms. Thus the actual occurrence, at the moment when Othello is entertaining his belief, is that the relation called “believing” is knitting together into one complex whole the four terms Othello, Desdemona, loving, and Cassio. What is called belief or judgment is nothing but this relation of believing or judging, which relates a mind to several things other than itself. An *act* of belief or of judgment is the occurrence between certain terms at some particular time, of the relation of believing or judging.

We are now in a position to understand what it is that distinguishes a true judgment from a false one. For this purpose we will adopt certain definitions. In every act of judgment there is a mind which judges, and there are terms concerning which it judges. We will call the mind the *subject* in the judgment, and the remaining terms the *objects*. Thus, when Othello judges that Desdemona loves Cassio, Othello is the subject, while the objects are

Desdemona and loving and Cassio. The subject and the objects together are called the *constituents* of the judgment. It will be observed that the relation of judging has what is called a “sense” or “direction.” We may say, metaphorically, that it puts its objects in a certain *order*, which we may indicate by means of the order of the words in the sentence. (In an inflected language, the same thing will be indicated by inflections, *e.g.* by the difference between nominative and accusative.) Othello’s judgment that Cassio loves Desdemona differs from his judgment that Desdemona loves Cassio, in spite of the fact that it consists of the same constituents, because the relation of judging places the constituents in a different order in the two cases. Similarly, if Cassio judges that Desdemona loves Othello, the constituents of the judgment are still the same, but their order is different. This property of having a “sense” or “direction” is one which the relation of judging shares with all other relations. The “sense” of relations is the ultimate source of order and series and a host of mathematical concepts; but we need not concern ourselves further with this aspect.

We spoke of the relation called “judging” or “believing” as knitting together into one complex whole the subject and the objects. In this respect, judging is exactly like every other relation. Whenever a relation holds between two or more terms, it unites the terms into a complex whole. If Othello loves Desdemona, there is such a complex whole as “Othello’s love for Desdemona.” The terms united by the relation may be themselves complex, or may be simple, but the whole which results from their being united must be complex. Wherever there is a relation which relates certain terms, there is a complex object formed of the union of those terms; and conversely, wherever there is a complex object, there is a relation which relates its constituents. When an act of believing occurs, there is a complex, in which “believing” is the uniting relation, and subject and objects are arranged in a certain order by the “sense” of the relation of believing. Among the objects, as we saw in considering “Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio,” one must be a relation—in this instance, the relation “loving.” But this relation, as it occurs in the act of believing, is not the relation which creates the unity of the complex whole consisting of the subject and the objects. The relation “loving,” as it occurs in the act of believing, is one of the objects—it is a brick in the structure, not the cement. The cement is the relation “believing.” When the belief is *true*, there is another complex unity, in which the relation which was one of the objects of the belief relates the other objects. Thus, *e.g.*, if Othello believes *truly* that Desdemona loves Cassio, then there is a complex unity, “Desdemona’s love for Cassio,” which is composed exclusively of the *objects* of the belief, in the same order as they had in the belief, with the relation which was one of the objects occurring now as the cement that binds together the other objects of the belief. On the other hand, when a belief is *false*, there is no such complex unity composed only of the objects of the belief. If Othello believes *falsely* that Desdemona loves Cassio, then

there is no such complex unity as “Desdemona’s love for Cassio.”

Thus a belief is *true* when it *corresponds* to a certain associated complex, and *false* when it does not. Assuming, for the sake of definiteness, that the objects of the belief are two terms and a relation, the terms being put in a certain order by the “sense” of the believing, then if the two terms in that order are united by the relation into a complex, the belief is true; if not, it is false. This constitutes the definition of truth and falsehood that we were in search of. Judging or believing is a certain complex unity of which a mind is a constituent; if the remaining constituents, taken in the order which they have in the belief, form a complex unity, then the belief is true; if not, it is false.

Thus although truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs, yet they are in a sense extrinsic properties, for the condition of the truth of a belief is something not involving beliefs, or (in general) any mind at all, but only the *objects* of the belief. A mind, which believes, believes truly when there is a *corresponding* complex not involving the mind, but only its objects. This correspondence ensures truth, and its absence entails falsehood. Hence, we account simultaneously for the two facts that beliefs (*a*) depend on minds for their *existence*, (*b*) do not depend on minds for their *truth*.

We may restate our theory as follows: If we take such a belief as “Othello believes that Desdemona loves Cassio,” we will call Desdemona and Cassio the *object terms*, and loving the *object relation*. If there is a complex unity “Desdemona’s love for Cassio,” consisting of the object terms related by the object relation in the same order as they have in the belief, then this complex unity is called the *fact corresponding to the belief*. Thus a belief is true when there is a corresponding fact, and is false when there is no corresponding fact.

It will be seen that minds do not *create* truth or falsehood. They create beliefs, but when once the beliefs are created, the mind cannot make them true or false, except in the special case where they concern future things which are within the power of the person believing, such as catching trains. What makes a belief true is a *fact*, and this fact does not (except in exceptional cases) in any way involve the mind of the person who has the belief.

Having now decided what we *mean* by truth and falsehood, we have next to consider what ways there are of knowing whether this or that belief is true or false. This consideration will occupy the next chapter.

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On Pragmatism – William James

From *What Pragmatism Means* by William James

Lecture II

. . . [T]ruth is ONE SPECIES OF GOOD, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good, and coordinate with it. THE TRUE IS THE NAME OF WHATEVER PROVES ITSELF TO BE GOOD IN THE WAY OF BELIEF, AND GOOD, TOO, FOR DEFINITE, ASSIGNABLE REASONS. Surely you must admit this, that if there were NO good for life in true ideas, or if the knowledge of them were positively disadvantageous and false ideas the only useful ones, then the current notion that truth is divine and precious, and its pursuit a duty, could never have grown up or become a dogma. In a world like that, our duty would be to SHUN truth, rather. But in this world, just as certain foods are not only agreeable to our taste, but good for our teeth, our stomach and our tissues; so certain ideas are not only agreeable to think about, or agreeable as supporting other ideas that we are fond of, but they are also helpful in life's practical struggles. If there be any life that it is really better we should lead, and if there be any idea which, if believed in, would help us to lead that life, then it would be really BETTER FOR US to believe in that idea, UNLESS, INDEED, BELIEF IN IT INCIDENTALLY CLASHED WITH OTHER GREATER VITAL BENEFITS.

‘What would be better for us to believe’! This sounds very like a definition of truth. It comes very near to saying ‘what we OUGHT to believe’: and in THAT definition none of you would find any oddity. Ought we ever not to believe what it is BETTER FOR US to believe? And can we then keep the notion of what is better for us, and what is true for us, permanently apart?

Pragmatism says no, and I fully agree with her. Probably you also agree, so far as the abstract statement goes, but with a suspicion that if we practically did believe everything that made for good in our own personal lives, we should be found indulging all kinds of fancies about this world's affairs, and all kinds of sentimental superstitions about a world hereafter. Your suspicion here is undoubtedly well founded, and it is evident that

something happens when you pass from the abstract to the concrete, that complicates the situation.

I said just now that what is better for us to believe is true UNLESS THE BELIEF INCIDENTALLY CLASHES WITH SOME OTHER VITAL BENEFIT. Now in real life what vital benefits is any particular belief of ours most liable to clash with? What indeed except the vital benefits yielded by OTHER BELIEFS when these prove incompatible with the first ones? In other words, the greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths. Truths have once for all this desperate instinct of self-preservation and of desire to extinguish whatever contradicts them. My belief in the Absolute, based on the good it does me, must run the gauntlet of all my other beliefs. Grant that it may be true in giving me a moral holiday. Nevertheless, as I conceive it, –and let me speak now confidentially, as it were, and merely in my own private person, –it clashes with other truths of mine whose benefits I hate to give up on its account. It happens to be associated with a kind of logic of which I am the enemy, I find that it entangles me in metaphysical paradoxes that are unacceptable, etc., etc.. But as I have enough trouble in life already without adding the trouble of carrying these intellectual inconsistencies, I personally just give up the Absolute. I just TAKE my moral holidays; or else as a professional philosopher, I try to justify them by some other principle.

If I could restrict my notion of the Absolute to its bare holiday giving value, it wouldn't clash with my other truths. But we cannot easily thus restrict our hypotheses. They carry supernumerary features, and these it is that clash so. My disbelief in the Absolute means then disbelief in those other supernumerary features, for I fully believe in the legitimacy of taking moral holidays.

You see by this what I meant when I called pragmatism a mediator and reconciler and said, borrowing the word from Papini, that he unstiffens our theories. She has in fact no prejudices whatever, no obstructive dogmas, no rigid canons of what shall count as proof. She is completely genial. She will entertain any hypothesis, she will consider any evidence. It follows that in the religious field she is at a great advantage both over positivistic empiricism, with its antitheological bias, and over religious rationalism, with its exclusive interest in the remote, the noble, the simple, and the abstract in the way of conception.

In short, she widens the field of search for God. Rationalism sticks to logic and the empyrean. Empiricism sticks to the external senses. Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses, and to count the humblest and most personal experiences. She will count mystical experiences if they have practical consequences. She will take a God who lives in the very dirt of private fact if that should

seem a likely place to find him.

Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted. If theological ideas should do this, if the notion of God, in particular, should prove to do it, how could pragmatism possibly deny God's existence? She could see no meaning in treating as 'not true' a notion that was pragmatically so successful. What other kind of truth could there be, for her, than all this agreement with concrete reality?

In my last lecture I shall return again to the relations of pragmatism with religion. But you see already how democratic she is. Her manners are as various and flexible, her resources as rich and endless, and her conclusions as friendly as those of mother nature.

Lecture VI

. . . I fully expect to see the pragmatist view of truth run through the classic stages of a theory's career. First, you know, a new theory is attacked as absurd; then it is admitted to be true, but obvious and insignificant; finally it is seen to be so important that its adversaries claim that they themselves discovered it. Our doctrine of truth is at present in the first of these three stages, with symptoms of the second stage having begun in certain quarters. I wish that this lecture might help it beyond the first stage in the eyes of many of you.

Truth, as any dictionary will tell you, is a property of certain of our ideas. It means their 'agreement,' as falsity means their disagreement, with 'reality.' Pragmatists and intellectualists both accept this definition as a matter of course. They begin to quarrel only after the question is raised as to what may precisely be meant by the term 'agreement,' and what by the term 'reality,' when reality is taken as something for our ideas to agree with.

In answering these questions the pragmatists are more analytic and painstaking, the intellectualists more offhand and irreflective. The popular notion is that a true idea must copy its reality. Like other popular views, this one follows the analogy of the most usual experience. Our true ideas of sensible things do indeed copy them. Shut your eyes and think of yonder clock on the wall, and you get just such a true picture or copy of its dial. But your idea of its 'works' (unless you are a clockmaker) is much less of a copy, yet it passes muster, for it in no way clashes with the reality. Even though it should shrink to the mere word 'works,' that word still serves you truly; and when you speak of the 'timekeeping function' of the clock, or of its spring's 'elasticity,' it is hard to see exactly what your ideas can copy.

You perceive that there is a problem here. Where our ideas cannot copy definitely their object, what does agreement with that object mean? Some idealists seem to say that they are true whenever they are what God means that we ought to think about that object. Others hold the copy view all through, and speak as if our ideas possessed truth just in proportion as they approach to being copies of the Absolute's eternal way of thinking.

These views, you see, invite pragmatistic discussion. But the great assumption of the intellectualists is that truth means essentially an inert static relation. When you've got your true idea of anything, there's an end of the matter. You're in possession; you KNOW; you have fulfilled your thinking destiny. You are where you ought to be mentally; you have obeyed your categorical imperative; and nothing more need follow on that climax of your rational destiny. Epistemologically you are in stable equilibrium.

Pragmatism, on the other hand, asks its usual question. "Grant an idea or belief to be true," it says, "what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash value in experiential terms?"

The moment pragmatism asks this question, it sees the answer: TRUE IDEAS ARE THOSE THAT WE CAN ASSIMILATE, VALIDATE, CORROBORATE AND VERIFY. FALSE IDEAS ARE THOSE THAT WE CANNOT. That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known as.

This thesis is what I have to defend. The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth HAPPENS to an idea. It BECOMES true, is MADE true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its verIFICATION. Its validity is the process of its validation.

But what do the words verification and validation themselves pragmatically mean? They again signify certain practical consequences of the verified and validated idea. It is hard to find any one phrase that characterizes these consequences better than the ordinary agreement formula—just such consequences being what we have in mind whenever we say that our ideas 'agree' with reality. They lead us, namely, through the acts and other ideas which they instigate, into or up to, or towards, other parts of experience with which we feel all the while such feeling being among our potentialities—that the original ideas remain in agreement. The connections and transitions come to us from point to point as being progressive, harmonious, satisfactory. This function of agreeable leading is what we mean by an idea's verification. . . .

. . . Let me begin by reminding you of the fact that the possession of true thoughts means everywhere the possession of invaluable instruments of action; and that our duty to gain truth, so far from being a blank command from out of the blue, or a 'stunt' self-imposed by our intellect, can account for itself by excellent practical reasons.

The importance to human life of having true beliefs about matters of fact is a thing too notorious. We live in a world of realities that can be infinitely useful or infinitely harmful. Ideas that tell us which of them to expect count as the true ideas in all this primary sphere of verification, and the pursuit of such ideas is a primary human duty. The possession of truth, so far from being here an end in itself, is only a preliminary means towards other vital satisfactions. If I am lost in the woods and starved, and find what looks like a cow path, it is of the utmost importance that I should think of a human habitation at the end of it, for if I do so and follow it, I save myself. The true thought is useful here because the house which is its object is useful. The practical value of true ideas is thus primarily derived from the practical importance of their objects to us. Their objects are, indeed, not important at all times. I may on another occasion have no use for the house; and then my idea of it, however verifiable, will be practically irrelevant, and had better remain latent. Yet since almost any object may some day become temporarily important, the advantage of having a general stock of extra truths, of ideas that shall be true of merely possible situations, is obvious. We store such extra truths away in our memories, and with the overflow we fill our books of reference. Whenever such an extra truth becomes practically relevant to one of our emergencies, it passes from cold storage to do work in the world, and our belief in it grows active. You can say of it then either that 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful.' Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing, namely that here is an idea that gets fulfilled and can be verified. True is the name for whatever idea starts the verification process, useful is the name for its completed function in experience. True ideas would never have been singled out as such, would never have acquired a class name, least of all a name suggesting value, unless they had been useful from the outset in this way.

From this simple cue pragmatism gets her general notion of truth as something essentially bound up with the way in which one moment in our experience may lead us towards other moments which it will be worthwhile to have been led to. Primarily, and on the commonsense level, the truth of a state of mind means this function of A LEADING THAT IS WORTH WHILE. When a moment in our experience, of any kind whatever, inspires us with a thought that is true, that means that sooner or later we dip by that thought's guidance into the particulars of experience again and make advantageous connection with them. This is a vague enough statement, but I beg you to retain it, for it is essential.

Our experience meanwhile is all shot through with regularities. One bit of it can warn us to get ready for another bit, can 'intend' or be 'significant of' that remoter object. The object's advent is the significance's verification. Truth, in these cases, meaning nothing but eventual verification, is manifestly incompatible with waywardness on our part. Woe to him whose beliefs play fast and loose with the order which realities follow in his experience: they will lead him nowhere or else make false connections.

By 'realities' or 'objects' here, we mean either things of common sense, sensibly present, or else commonsense relations, such as dates, places, distances, kinds, activities. Following our mental image of a house along the cow path, we actually come to see the house; we get the image's full verification. SUCH SIMPLY AND FULLY VERIFIED LEADINGS ARE CERTAINLY THE ORIGINALS AND PROTOTYPES OF THE TRUTHPROCESS. Experience offers indeed other forms of truth process, but they are all conceivable as being primary verifications arrested, multiplied or substituted one for another

Take, for instance, yonder object on the wall. You and I consider it to be a 'clock', although no one of us has seen the hidden works that make it one. We let our notion pass for true without attempting to verify. If truths mean verification process essentially ought we then to call such unverified truths as this abortive? No, for they form the overwhelmingly large number of the truths we live by. Indirect as well as direct verifications pass muster. Where circumstantial evidence is sufficient, we can go without eye witnessing. Just as we here assume Japan to exist without ever having been there, because it WORKS to do so, everything we know conspiring with the belief, and nothing interfering, so we assume that thing to be a clock. We USE it as a clock, regulating the length of our lecture by it. The verification of the assumption here means its leading to no frustration or contradiction. VerifiABILITY of wheels and weights and pendulum is as good as verification. For one truth process completed there are a million in our lives that function in this state of nascency. They turn us TOWARDS direct verification; lead us into the SURROUNDINGS of the objects they envisage; and then, if everything runs on harmoniously, we are so sure that verification is possible that we omit it, and are usually justified by all that happens.

Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs 'pass,' so long as nothing challenges them, just as banknotes pass so long as nobody refuses them. But this all points to direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash basis whatever. You accept my verification of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other's truth. But beliefs verified concretely by SOMEBODY are the posts of the whole superstructure.

Another great reason—beside economy of time—for waiving complete verification in the usual business of life is that all things exist in kinds and not singly. Our world is found once for all to have that peculiarity. So that when we have once directly verified our ideas about one specimen of a kind, we consider ourselves free to apply them to other specimens without verification. A mind that habitually discerns the kind of thing before it, and acts by the law of the kind immediately, without pausing to verify, will be a ‘true’ mind in ninety-nine out of a hundred emergencies, proved so by its conduct fitting everything it meets, and getting no refutation.

INDIRECTLY OR ONLY POTENTIALLY VERIFYING PROCESSES MAY THUS BE TRUE AS WELL AS FULL

VERIFICATION PROCESSES. They work as true processes would work, give us the same advantages, and claim our recognition for the same reasons. . . .

. . . Our account of truth is an account of truths in the plural, of processes of leading, realized in rebus, and having only this quality in common, that they PAY. They pay by guiding us into or towards some part of a system that dips at numerous points into sense percepts, which we may copy mentally or not, but with which at any rate we are now in the kind of commerce vaguely designated as verification. Truth for us is simply a collective name for verification processes, just as health, wealth, strength, etc., are names for other processes connected with life, and also pursued because it pays to pursue them. Truth is MADE, just as health, wealth and strength are made, in the course of experience.

Here rationalism is instantaneously up in arms against us. I can imagine a rationalist to talk as follows:

“Truth is not made,” he will say; “it absolutely obtains, being a unique relation that does not wait upon any process, but shoots straight over the head of experience, and hits its reality every time. Our belief that yon thing on the wall is a clock is true already, although no one in the whole history of the world should verify it. The bare quality of standing in that transcendent relation is what makes any thought true that possesses it, whether or not there be verification. You pragmatists put the cart before the horse in making truth’s being reside in verification processes. These are merely signs of its being, merely our lame ways of ascertaining after the fact, which of our ideas already has possessed the wondrous quality. The quality itself is timeless, like all essences and natures. Thoughts partake of it directly, as they partake of falsity or of irrelevancy. It can’t be analyzed away into pragmatic consequences.”

The whole plausibility of this rationalist tirade is due to the fact to which we have already

paid so much attention. In our world, namely, abounding as it does in things of similar kinds and similarly associated, one verification serves for others of its kind, and one great use of knowing things is to be led not so much to them as to their associates, especially to human talk about them. The quality of truth, obtaining ante rem, pragmatically means, then, the fact that in such a world innumerable ideas work better by their indirect or possible than by their direct and actual verification. Truth ante rem means only verifiability, then; or else it is a case of the stock rationalist trick of treating the NAME of a concrete phenomenal reality as an independent prior entity, and placing it behind the reality as its explanation. . . .

. . . In the case of 'wealth' we all see the fallacy. We know that wealth is but a name for concrete processes that certain men's lives play a part in, and not a natural excellence found in Messrs. Rockefeller and Carnegie, but not in the rest of us.

Like wealth, health also lives in rebus. It is a name for processes, as digestion, circulation, sleep, etc., that go on happily, though in this instance we are more inclined to think of it as a principle and to say the man digests and sleeps so well BECAUSE he is so heal your

With 'strength' we are, I think, more rationalistic still, and decidedly inclined to treat it as an excellence preexisting in the man and explanatory of the herculean performances of his muscles.

With 'truth' most people go over the border entirely and treat the rationalistic account as self-evident. But really all these words in TH are exactly similar. Truth exists ante rem just as much and as little as the other things do.

The scholastics, following Aristotle, made much of the distinction between habit and act. Health in actu means, among other things, good sleeping and digesting. But a heal your man need not always be sleeping, or always digesting, any more than a wealthy man need be always handling money, or a strong man always lifting weights. All such qualities sink to the status of 'habits' between their times of exercise; and similarly truth becomes a habit of certain of our ideas and beliefs in their intervals of rest from their verifying activities. But those activities are the root of the whole matter and the condition of there being any habit to exist in the intervals.

'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all farther experiences equally satisfactorily. Experience, as we know, has ways of BOILING OVER, and making us

correct our present formulas.

The ‘absolutely’ true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will someday converge. It runs on all fours with the perfectly wise man, and with the absolutely complete experience; and, if these ideals are ever realized, they will all be realized together. Meanwhile we have to live today by what truth we can get today, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood. Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean space, Aristotelian logic, scholastic metaphysics, were expedient for centuries, but human experience has boiled over those limits, and we now call these things only relatively true, or true within those borders of experience. ‘Absolutely’ they are false; for we know that those limits were casual, and might have been transcended by past theorists just as they are by present thinkers. . .

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On Contingency of Language – Richard Rorty

Selection from *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* by Richard Rorty

About two hundred years ago, the idea that truth was made rather than found began to take hold of the imagination of Europe. The French Revolution had shown that the whole vocabulary of social relations, and the whole spectrum of social institutions, could be replaced almost overnight. This precedent made utopian politics the rule rather than the exception among intellectuals. Utopian politics sets aside questions about both the will of God and the nature of man and dreams of creating a hitherto unknown form of society.

At about the same time, the Romantic poets were showing what happens when art is thought of no longer as imitation but, rather, as the artist's self creation. The poets claimed for art the place in culture traditionally held by religion and philosophy, the place

which the Enlightenment had claimed for science. The precedent the Romantics set lent initial plausibility to their claim. The actual role of novels, poems, plays, paintings, statues, and buildings in the social movements of the last century and a half has given it still greater plausibility.

By now these two tendencies have joined forces and have achieved cultural hegemony. For most contemporary intellectuals, questions of ends as opposed to means questions about how to give a sense to one's own life or that of one's community are questions for art or politics, or both, rather than for religion, philosophy, or science. This development has led to a split within philosophy. Some philosophers have remained faithful to the Enlightenment and have continued to identify themselves with the cause of science. They see the old struggle between science and religion, reason and unreason, as still going on, having now taken the form of a struggle between reason and all those forces within culture which think of truth as made rather than found. These philosophers take science as the paradigmatic human activity, and they insist that natural science discovers truth rather than makes it. They regard "making truth" as a merely metaphorical, and thoroughly misleading, phrase. They think of politics and art as spheres in which the notion of "truth" is out of place. Other philosophers, realizing that the world as it is described by the physical sciences teaches no moral lesson, offers no spiritual comfort, have concluded that science is no more than the handmaiden of technology. These philosophers have ranged themselves alongside the political utopian and the innovative artist.

Whereas the first kind of philosopher contrasts "hard scientific fact" with the "subjective" or with "metaphor," the second kind sees science as one more human activity, rather as the place at which human beings encounter a "hard," nonhuman reality. On this view, great scientists invent descriptions of the world which are useful for purposes of predicting and controlling what happens, just as poets and political thinkers invent other descriptions of it for other purposes. But there is no sense in which any of these descriptions is an accurate representation of the way the world is in itself. These philosophers regard the very idea of such a representation as pointless.

Had the first sort of philosopher, the sort whose hero is the natural scientist, always been the only sort, we should probably never have had an autonomous discipline called "philosophy" a discipline as distinct from the sciences as it is from theology or from the arts. As such a discipline, philosophy is no more than two hundred years old. It owes its existence to attempts by the German idealists to put the sciences in their place and to give a clear sense to the vague idea that human beings make truth rather than find it. Kant wanted to consign science to the realm of second-rate truth — truth about a

phenomenal world. Hegel wanted to think of natural science as a description of spirit not yet fully conscious of its own spiritual nature, and thereby to elevate the sort of truth offered by the poet and the political revolutionary to first-rate status.

German idealism, however, was a short-lived and unsatisfactory compromise. For Kant and Hegel went only halfway in their repudiation of the idea that truth is "out there." They were willing to view the world of empirical science as a made world to see matter as constructed by mind, or as consisting in mind insufficiently conscious of its own mental character. But they persisted in seeing mind, spirit, the depths of the human self, as having an intrinsic nature one which could be known by a kind of non-empirical super science called philosophy. This meant that only half of truth the bottom, scientific half was made. Higher truth, the truth about mind, the province of philosophy, was still a matter of discovery rather than creation.

What was needed, and what the idealists were unable to envisage, was a repudiation of the very idea of anything mind or matter, self or world having an intrinsic nature to be expressed or represented. For the idealists confused the idea that nothing has such a nature with the idea that space and time are unreal, that human beings cause the spatiotemporal world to exist.

We need to make a distinction between the claim that the world is out there and the claim that truth is out there. To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states. To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations.

Truth cannot be out there cannot exist independently of the human mind because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own unaided by the describing activities of human beings cannot.

The suggestion that truth, as well as the world, is out there is a legacy of an age in which the world was seen as the creation of a being who had a language of his own. If we cease to attempt to make sense of the idea of such a nonhuman language, we shall not be tempted to confuse the platitude that the world may cause us to be justified in believing a sentence true with the claim that the world splits itself up, on its own initiative, into sentence shaped chunks called "facts." But if one clings to the notion of self subsistent facts, it is easy to start capitalizing the word "truth" and treating it as something identical either with God or with the world as God's project. Then one will say, for example, that

Truth is great, and will prevail.

This conflation is facilitated by confining attention to single sentences as opposed to vocabularies. For we often let the world decide the competition between alternative sentences (e.g., between "Red wins" and "Black wins" or between "The butler did it" and "The doctor did it"). In such cases, it is easy to run together the fact that the world contains the causes of our being justified in holding a belief with the claim that some nonlinguistic state of the world is itself an example of truth, or that some such state "makes a belief true" by "corresponding" to it. But it is not so easy when we turn from individual sentences to vocabularies as wholes. When we consider examples of alternative language games the vocabulary of ancient Athenian politics versus Jefferson's, the moral vocabulary of Saint Paul versus Freud's, the jargon of Newton versus that of Aristotle, the idiom of Blake versus that of Dryden it is difficult to think of the world as making one of these better than another, of the world as deciding between them. When the notion of "description of the world" is moved from the level of criterion governed sentences within language games to language games as wholes, games which we do not choose between by reference to criteria, the idea that the world decides which descriptions are true can no longer be given a clear sense. It becomes hard to think that that vocabulary is somehow already out there in the world, waiting for us to discover it. Attention (of the sort fostered by intellectual historians like Thomas Kuhn and Quentin Skinner) to the vocabularies in which sentences are formulated, rather than to individual sentences, makes us realize, for example, that the fact that Newton's vocabulary lets us predict the world more easily than Aristotle's does not mean that the world speaks Newtonian.

The world does not speak. Only we do. The world can, once we have programmed ourselves with a language, cause us to hold beliefs. But it cannot propose a language for us to speak. Only other human beings can do that. The realization that the world does not tell us what language games to play should not, however, lead us to say that a decision about which to play is arbitrary, nor to say that it is the expression of something deep within us. The moral is not that objective criteria for choice of vocabulary are to be replaced with subjective criteria, reason with will or feeling. It is rather that the notions of criteria and choice (including that of "arbitrary" choice) are no longer in point when it comes to changes from one language game to another. Europe did not decide to accept the idiom of Romantic poetry, or of socialist politics, or of Galilean mechanics. That sort of shift was no more an act of will than it was a result of argument. Rather, Europe gradually lost the habit of using certain words and gradually acquired the habit of using others.

As Kuhn argues in *The Copernican Revolution*, we did not decide on the basis of some

telescopic observations, or on the basis of anything else, that the earth was not the center of the universe, that macroscopic behavior could be explained on the basis of microstructural motion, and that prediction and control should be the principal aim of scientific theorizing. Rather, after a hundred years of inconclusive muddle, the Europeans found themselves speaking in a way which took these interlocked theses for granted. Cultural change of this magnitude does not result from applying criteria (or from "arbitrary decision") any more than individuals become theists or atheists, or shift from one spouse or circle of friends to another, as a result either of applying criteria or of acts of gratuity. We should not look within ourselves for criteria of decision in such matters any more than we should look to the world.

The temptation to look for criteria is a species of the more general temptation to think of the world, or the human self, as possessing an intrinsic nature, an essence. That is, it is the result of the temptation to privilege someone among the many languages in which we habitually describe the world or ourselves. As long as we think that there is some relation called "fitting the world" or "expressing the real nature of the self" which can be possessed or lacked by vocabularies-as-wholes, we shall continue the traditional philosophical search for a criterion to tell us which vocabularies have this desirable feature. But if we could ever become reconciled to the idea that most of reality is indifferent to our descriptions of it, and that the human self is created by the use of a vocabulary rather than being adequately or inadequately expressed in a vocabulary, then we should at last have assimilated what was true in the Romantic idea that truth is made rather than found. What is true about this claim is just that languages are made rather than found, and that truth is a property of linguistic entities, of sentences.

I can sum up by redescribing what, in my view, the revolutionaries and poets of two centuries ago were getting at. What was glimpsed at the end of the eighteenth century was that anything could be made to look good or bad, important or unimportant, useful or useless, by being redescribed. What Hegel describes as the process of spirit gradually becoming self-conscious of its intrinsic nature is better described as the process of European linguistic practices changing at a faster and faster rate. The phenomenon Hegel describes is that of more people offering more radical redescriptions of more things than ever before, of young people going through half a dozen spiritual gestalt switches before reaching adulthood. What the Romantics expressed as the claim that imagination, rather than reason, is the central human faculty was the realization that a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change. What political utopians since the French Revolution have sensed is not that an enduring, substratal human nature has been suppressed or repressed by "unnatural" or "irrational" social institutions but rather that changing languages and other social practices may

produce human beings of a sort that had never before existed. The German idealists, the French revolutionaries, and the Romantic poets had in common a dim sense that human beings whose language changed so that they no longer spoke of themselves as responsible to nonhuman powers would thereby become a new kind of human beings.

The difficulty faced by a philosopher who, like myself, is sympathetic to this suggestion one who thinks of himself as auxiliary to the poet rather than to the physicist is to avoid hinting that this suggestion gets something right, that my sort of philosophy corresponds to the way things really are. For this talk of correspondence brings back just the idea my sort of philosopher wants to get rid of, the idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature. From our point of view, explaining the success of science, or the desirability of political liberalism, by talk of "fitting the world" or "expressing human nature" is like explaining why opium makes you sleepy by talking about its dormitive power. To say that Freud's vocabulary gets at the truth about human nature, or Newton's at the truth about the heavens, is not an explanation of anything. It is just an empty compliment one traditionally paid to writers whose novel jargon we have found useful. To say that there is no such thing as intrinsic nature is not to say that the intrinsic nature of reality has turned out, surprisingly enough, to be extrinsic. It is to say that the term "intrinsic nature" is one which it would pay us not to use, an expression which has caused more trouble than it has been worth. To say that we should drop the idea of truth as out there waiting to be discovered is not to say that we have discovered that, out there, there is no truth.² It is to say that our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter, as a topic of philosophical interest, or "true" as a term which repays "analysis." "The nature of truth" is an unprofitable topic, resembling in this respect "the nature of man" and "the nature of God," and differing from "the nature of the positron," and "the nature of Oedipal fixation." But this claim about relative profitability, in turn, is just the recommendation that we in fact say little about these topics, and see how we get on.

On the view of philosophy which I am offering, philosophers should not be asked for arguments against, for example, the correspondence theory of truth or the idea of the "intrinsic nature of reality." The trouble with arguments against the use of a familiar and time-honored vocabulary is that they are expected to be phrased in that very vocabulary. They are expected to show that central elements in that vocabulary are "inconsistent in their own terms" or that they "deconstruct themselves." But that can never be shown. Any argument to the effect that our familiar use of a familiar term is incoherent, or empty, or confused, or vague, or "merely metaphorical" is bound to be inconclusive and question begging. For such use is, after all, the paradigm of coherent, meaningful, literal, speech. Such arguments are always parasitic upon, and abbreviations for, claims that a better vocabulary is available. Interesting philosophy is rarely an examination of the pros and

cons of a thesis. Usually it is, implicitly or explicitly, a contest between an entrenched vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half formed new vocabulary which vaguely promises great things.

The latter "method" of philosophy is the same as the "method" of utopian politics or revolutionary science (as opposed to parliamentary politics, or normal science). The method is to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of nonlinguistic behavior, for example, the adoption of new scientific equipment or new social institutions. This sort of philosophy does not work piece by piece, analyzing concept after concept, or testing thesis after thesis. Rather, it works holistically and pragmatically. It says things like "try thinking of it this way" or more specifically, "try to ignore the apparently futile traditional questions by substituting the following new and possibly interesting questions." It does not pretend to have a better candidate for doing the same old things which we did when we spoke in the old way. Rather, it suggests that we might want to stop doing those things and do something else. But it does not argue for this suggestion on the basis of antecedent criteria common to the old and the new language games. For just insofar as the new language really is new, there will be no such criteria.

Conforming to my own precepts, I am not going to offer arguments against the vocabulary I want to replace. Instead, I am going to try to make the vocabulary I favor look attractive by showing how it may be used to describe a variety of topics. More specifically, in this chapter I shall be describing the work of Donald Davidson in philosophy of language as a manifestation of a willingness to drop the idea of "intrinsic nature," a willingness to face up to the contingency of the language we use. In subsequent chapters, I shall try to show how a recognition of that contingency leads to a recognition of the contingency of conscience, and how both recognitions lead to a picture of intellectual and moral progress as a history of increasingly useful metaphors rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are.

I begin, in this first chapter, with the philosophy of language because I want to spell out the consequences of my claims that only sentences can be true, and that human beings make truths by making languages in which to phrase sentences. I shall concentrate on the work of Davidson because he is the philosopher who has done most to explore these consequences.³ Davidson's treatment of truth ties in with his treatment of language learning and of metaphor to form the first systematic treatment of language which breaks completely with the notion of language as something which can be adequate or inadequate to the world or to the self. For Davidson breaks with the notion that language

is a medium a medium either of representation or of expression.

I can explain what I mean by a medium by noting that the traditional picture of the human situation has been one in which human beings are not simply networks of beliefs and desires but rather beings which have those beliefs and desires. The traditional view is that there is a core self which can look at, decide among, use, and express itself by means of, such beliefs and desires. Further, these beliefs and desires are criticizable not simply by reference to their ability to cohere with one another, but by reference to something exterior to the network within which they are strands. Beliefs are, on this account, criticizable because they fail to correspond to reality. Desires are criticizable because they fail to correspond to the essential nature of the human self because they are "irrational" or "unnatural." So we have a picture of the essential core of the self on one side of this network of beliefs and desires, and reality on the other side. In this picture, the network is the product of an interaction between the two, alternately expressing the one and representing the other. This is the traditional subject-object picture which idealism tried and failed to replace, and which Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, James, Dewey, Goodman, Sellars, Putnam, Davidson and others have tried to replace without entangling themselves in the idealists' paradoxes.

One phase of this effort of replacement consisted in an attempt to substitute "language" for "mind" or "consciousness" as the medium out of which beliefs and desires are constructed, the third, mediating, element between self and world. This turn toward language was thought of as a progressive, naturalizing move. It seemed so because it seemed easier to give a causal account of the evolutionary emergence of language using organisms than of the metaphysical emergence of consciousness out of nonconsciousness. But in itself this substitution is ineffective. For if we stick to the picture of language as a medium, something standing between the self and the nonhuman reality with which the self seeks to be in touch, we have made no progress. We are still using a subject object picture, and we are still stuck with issues about skepticism, idealism, and realism. For we are still able to ask questions about language of the same sort we asked about consciousness.

These are such questions as: "Does the medium between the self and reality get them together or keep them apart?" "Should we see the medium primarily as a medium of expression of articulating what lies deep within the self? Or should we see it as primarily a medium of representation showing the self what lies outside it?" Idealist theories of knowledge and Romantic notions of the imagination can, alas, easily be transposed from the jargon of "consciousness" into that of "language." Realistic and moralistic reactions to such theories can be transposed equally easily. So the seesaw battles between

romanticism and moralism, and between idealism and realism, will continue as long as one thinks there is a hope of making sense of the question of whether a given language is "adequate" to a task either the task of properly expressing the nature of the human species, or the task of properly representing the structure of nonhuman reality.

We need to get off this seesaw. Davidson helps us do so. For he does not view language as a medium for either expression or representation. So he is able to set aside the idea that both the self and reality have intrinsic natures, natures which are out there waiting to be known. Davidson's view of language is neither reductionist nor expansionist. It does not, as analytical philosophers sometimes have, purport to give reductive definitions of semantical notions like "truth" or "intentionality" or "reference." Nor does it resemble Heidegger's attempt to make language into a kind of divinity, something of which human beings are mere emanations. As Derrida has warned us, such an apotheosis of language is merely a transposed version of the idealists' apotheosis of consciousness.

In avoiding both reductionism and expansionism, Davidson resembles Wittgenstein. Both philosophers treat alternative vocabularies as more like alternative tools than like bits of a jigsaw puzzle. To treat them as pieces of a puzzle is to assume that all vocabularies are dispensable, or reducible to other vocabularies, or capable of being united with all other vocabularies in one grand unified super vocabulary. If we avoid this assumption, we shall not be inclined to ask questions like "What is the place of consciousness in a world of molecules?" "Are colors more mind dependent than weights?" "What is the place of value in a world of fact?" "What is the place of intentionality in a world of causation?" "What is the relation between the solid table of common sense and the unsolid table of microphysics?" or "What is the relation of language to thought?" We should not try to answer such questions, for doing so leads either to the evident failures of reductionism or to the short-lived successes of expansionism. We should restrict ourselves to questions like "Does our use of these words get in the way of our use of those other words?" This is a question about whether our use of tools is inefficient, not a question about whether our beliefs are contradictory.

"Merely philosophical" questions, like Eddington's question about the two tables, are attempts to stir up a factitious theoretical quarrel between vocabularies which have proved capable of peaceful coexistence. The questions I have recited above are all cases in which philosophers have given their subject a bad name by seeing difficulties nobody else sees. But this is not to say that vocabularies never do get in the way of each other. On the contrary, revolutionary achievements in the arts, in the sciences, and in moral and political thought typically occur when somebody realizes that two or more of our vocabularies are interfering with each other, and proceeds to invent a new vocabulary to

replace both. For example, the traditional Aristotelian vocabulary got in the way of the mathematized vocabulary that was being developed in the sixteenth century by students of mechanics. Again, young German theology students of the late eighteenth century like Hegel and Holderlin found that the vocabulary in which they worshiped Jesus was getting in the way of the vocabulary in which they worshiped the Greeks. Yet again, the use of Rossetti like tropes got in the way of the early Yeats's use of Blakean tropes.

The gradual trial-and-error creation of a new, third, vocabulary the sort of vocabulary developed by people like Galileo, Hegel, or the later Yeats is not a discovery about how old vocabularies fit together. That is why it cannot be reached by an inferential process by starting with premises formulated in the old vocabularies. Such creations are not the result of successfully fitting together pieces of a puzzle. They are not discoveries of a reality behind the appearances, of an undistorted view of the whole picture with which to replace myopic views of its parts. The proper analogy is with the invention of new tools to take the place of old tools. To come up with such a vocabulary is more like discarding the lever and the chock because one has envisaged the pulley, or like discarding gesso and tempera because one has now figured out how to size canvas properly.

This Wittgensteinian analogy between vocabularies and tools has one obvious drawback. The craftsman typically knows what job he needs to do before picking or inventing tools with which to do it. By contrast, someone like Galileo, Yeats, or Hegel (a "poet" in my wide sense of the term the sense of "one who makes things new") is typically unable to make clear exactly what it is that he wants to do before developing the language in which he succeeds in doing it. His new vocabulary makes possible, for the first time, a formulation of its own purpose. It is a tool for doing something which could not have been envisaged prior to the development of a particular set of descriptions, those which it itself helps to provide. But I shall, for the moment, ignore this dis-analogy. I want simply to remark that the contrast between the jigsaw puzzle and the "tool" models of alternative vocabularies reflects the contrast between in Nietzsche's slightly misleading terms the will to truth and the will to self overcoming. Both are expressions of the contrast between the attempt to represent or express something that was already there and the attempt to make something that never had been dreamed of before.

Davidson spells out the implications of Wittgenstein's treatment of vocabularies as tools by raising explicit doubts about the assumptions underlying traditional preWittgensteinian accounts of language. These accounts have taken for granted that questions like "Is the language we are presently using the 'right' language is it adequate to its task as a medium of expression or representation?" "Is our language a transparent or an opaque medium?" make sense. Such questions assume there are relations such as

"fitting the world" or "being faithful to the true nature of the self" in which language might stand to nonlanguage. This assumption goes along with the assumption that "our language" the language we speak now, the vocabulary at the disposal of educated inhabitants of the twentieth century is somehow a unity, a third thing which stands in some determinate relation with two other unities the self and reality. Both assumptions are natural enough, once we accept the idea that there are nonlinguistic things called "meanings" which it is the task of language to express, as well as the idea that there are nonlinguistic things called "facts" which it is the task of language to represent. Both ideas enshrine the notion of language as medium.

Davidson's polemics against the traditional philosophical uses of the terms "fact" and "meaning," and against what he calls "the scheme content model" of thought and inquiry, are parts of a larger polemic against the idea that there is a fixed task for language to perform, and an entity called "language" or "the language" or "our language" which may or may not be performing this task efficiently. Davidson's doubt that there is any such entity parallels Gilbert Ryle's and Daniel Dennett's doubts about whether there is anything called "the mind" or "consciousness."⁴ Both sets of doubts are doubts about the utility of the notion of a medium between the self and reality the sort of medium which realists see as transparent and skeptics as opaque.

In a recent paper, nicely entitled "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs,"⁵ Davidson tries to undermine the notion of languages as entities by developing the notion of what he calls "a passing theory" about the noises and inscriptions presently being produced by a fellow human. Think of such a theory as part of a larger "passing theory" about this person's total behavior a set of guesses about what she will do under what conditions. Such a theory is "passing" because it must constantly be corrected to allow for mumbles, stumbles, malapropisms, metaphors, tics, seizures, psychotic symptoms, egregious stupidity, strokes of genius, and the like. To make things easier, imagine that I am forming such a theory about the current behavior of a native of an exotic culture into which I have unexpectedly parachuted. This strange person, who presumably finds me equally strange, will simultaneously be busy forming a theory about my behavior. If we ever succeed in communicating easily and happily, it will be because her guesses about what I am going to do next, including what noises I am going to make next, and my own expectations about what I shall do or say under certain circumstances, come more or less to coincide, and because the converse is also true. She and I are coping with each other as we might cope with mangoes or boa constrictors we are trying not to be taken by surprise. To say that we come to speak the same language is to say, as Davidson puts it, that "we tend to converge on passing theories." Davidson's point is that all "two people need, if they are to understand one another through speech, is the ability to converge on

passing theories from utterance to utterance."

Davidson's account of linguistic communication dispenses with the picture of language as a third thing intervening between self and reality, and of different languages as barriers between persons or cultures. To say that one's previous language was inappropriate for dealing with some segment of the world (for example, the starry heavens above, or the raging passions within) is just to say that one is now, having learned a new language, able to handle that segment more easily. To say that two communities have trouble getting along because the words they use are so hard to translate into each other is just to say that the linguistic behavior of inhabitants of one community may, like the rest of their behavior, be hard for inhabitants of the other community to predict. As Davidson puts it,

We should realize that we have abandoned not only the ordinary notion of a language, but we have erased the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around the world generally. For there are no rules for arriving at passing theories that work.... There is no more chance of regularizing, or teaching, this process than there is of regularizing or teaching the process of creating new theories to cope with new data for that is what this process involves....

There is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what philosophers, at least, have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned or mastered. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language users master and then apply to cases ... We should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions.⁶

This line of thought about language is analogous to the Ryle-Dennett view that when we use a mentalistic terminology we are simply using an efficient vocabulary the vocabulary characteristic of what Dennett calls the "intentional stance" to predict what an organism is likely to do or say under various sets of circumstances. Davidson is a nonreductive behaviorist about language in the same way that Ryle was a nonreductive behaviorist about mind. Neither has any desire to give equivalents in Behaviorese for talk about beliefs or about reference. But both are saying: Think of the term "mind" or "language" not as the name of a medium between self and reality but simply as a flag which signals the desirability of using a certain vocabulary when trying to cope with certain kinds of organisms. To say that a given organism or, for that matter, a given machine has a mind is just to say that, for some purposes, it will pay to think of it as having beliefs and desires. To say that it is a language user is just to say that pairing off the marks and noises it makes with those we make will prove a useful tactic in predicting and controlling its future behavior.

This Wittgensteinian attitude, developed by Ryle and Dennett for minds and by Davidson for languages, naturalizes mind and language by making all questions about the relation of either to the rest of universe causal questions, as opposed to questions about adequacy of representation or expression. It makes perfectly good sense to ask how we got from the relative mindlessness of the monkey to the full-fledged mindedness of the human, or from speaking Neanderthal to speaking postmodern, if these are construed as straightforward causal questions. In the former case the answer takes us off into neurology and thence into evolutionary biology. But in the latter case it takes us into intellectual history viewed as the history of metaphor. For my purposes in this book, it is the latter which is important. So I shall spend the rest of this chapter sketching an account of intellectual and moral progress which squares with Davidson's account of language.

To see the history of language, and thus of the arts, the sciences, and the moral sense, as the history of metaphor is to drop the picture of the human mind, or human languages, becoming better and better suited to the purposes for which God or Nature designed them, for example, able to express more and more meanings or to represent more and more facts. The idea that language has a purpose goes once the idea of language as medium goes. A culture which renounced both ideas would be the triumph of those tendencies in modern thought which began two hundred years ago, the tendencies common to German idealism, Romantic poetry, and utopian politics.

A nonteleological view of intellectual history, including the history of science, does for the theory of culture what the Mendelian, mechanistic, account of natural selection did for evolutionary theory. Mendel let us see mind as something which just happened rather than as something which was the point of the whole process. Davidson lets us think of the history of language, and thus of culture, as Darwin taught us to think of the history of a coral reef. Old metaphors are constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors. This analogy lets us think of "our language" that is, of the science and culture of twentieth century Europe as something that took shape as a result of a great number of sheer contingencies. Our language and our culture are as much a contingency, as much a result of thousands of small mutations finding niches (and millions of others finding no niches), as are the orchids and the anthropoids.

To accept this analogy, we must follow Mary Hesse in thinking of scientific revolutions as "metaphoric redescrptions" of nature rather than insights into the intrinsic nature of nature.? Further, we must resist the temptation to think that the redescrptions of reality offered by contemporary physical or biological science are somehow closer to "the things themselves," less "mind dependent," than the redescrptions of history offered by

contemporary culture criticism. We need to see the constellations of causal forces which produced talk of DNA or of the Big Bang as of a piece with the causal forces which produced talk of "secularization" or of "late capitalism." These various constellations are the random factors which have made some things subjects of conversation for us and others not, have made some projects and not others possible and important.

I can develop the contrast between the idea that the history of culture has a telos such as the discovery of truth, or the emancipation of humanity and the Nietzschean and Davidsonian picture which I am sketching by noting that the latter picture is compatible with a bleakly mechanical description of the relation between human beings and the rest of the universe. For genuine novelty can, after all, occur in a world of blind, contingent, mechanical forces. Think of novelty as the sort of thing which happens when, for example, a cosmic ray scrambles the atoms in a DNA molecule, thus sending things off in the direction of the orchids or the anthropoids. The orchids, when their time came, were no less novel or marvelous for the sheer contingency of this necessary condition of their existence. Analogously, for all we know, or should care, Aristotle's metaphorical use of *ousia*, Saint Paul's metaphorical use of *agape*, and Newton's metaphorical use of *gravitas*, were the results of cosmic rays scrambling the fine structure of some crucial neurons in their respective brains. Or, more plausibly, they were the result of some odd episodes in infancy some obsessional kinks left in these brains by idiosyncratic traumata. It hardly matters how the trick was done. The results were marvelous. There had never been such things before.

This account of intellectual history chimes with Nietzsche's definition of "truth" as "a mobile army of metaphors." It also chimes with the description I offered earlier of people like Galileo and Hegel and Yeats, people in whose minds new vocabularies developed, thereby equipping them with tools for doing things which could not even have been envisaged before these tools were available. But in order to accept this picture, we need to see the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical in the way Davidson sees it: not as a distinction between two sorts of meaning, nor as a distinction between two sorts of interpretation, but as a distinction between familiar and unfamiliar uses of noises and marks. The literal uses of noises and marks are the uses we can handle by our old theories about what people will say under various conditions. Their metaphorical use is the sort which makes us get busy developing a new theory.

Davidson puts this point by saying that one should not think of metaphorical expressions as having meanings distinct from their literal ones. To have a meaning is to have a place in a language game. Metaphors, by definition, do not. Davidson denies, in his words, "the thesis that associated with a metaphor is a cognitive content that its author wishes to

convey and that the interpreter must grasp if he is to get the message." In his view, tossing a metaphor into a conversation is like suddenly breaking off the conversation long enough to make a face, or pulling a photograph out of your pocket and displaying it, or pointing at a feature of the surroundings, or slapping your interlocutor's face, or kissing him. Tossing a metaphor into a text is like using italics, or illustrations, or odd punctuation or formats.

All these are ways of producing effects on your interlocutor or your reader, but not ways of conveying a message. To none of these is it appropriate to respond with "What exactly are you trying to say?" If one had wanted to say something if one had wanted to utter a sentence with a meaning one would presumably have done so. But instead one thought that one's aim could be better carried out by other means. That one uses familiar words in unfamiliar ways rather than slaps, kisses, pictures, gestures, or grimaces does not show that what one said must have a meaning. An attempt to state that meaning would be an attempt to find some familiar (that is, literal) use of words some sentence which already had a place in the language game and, to claim that one might just as well have that. But the unparaphrasability of metaphor is just the unsuitability of any such familiar sentence for one's purpose.

Uttering a sentence without a fixed place in a language game is, as the positivists rightly have said, to utter something which is neither true nor false something which is not, in Ian Hacking's terms, a "truth-value candidate." This is because it is a sentence which one cannot confirm or disconfirm, argue for or against. One can only savor it or spit it out. But this is not to say that it may not, in time, become a truth-value candidate. If it is savored rather than spat out, the sentence may be repeated, caught up, bandied about. Then it will gradually require a habitual use, a familiar place in the language game. It will thereby have ceased to be a metaphor or, if you like, it will have become what most sentences of our language are, a dead metaphor. It will be just one more, literally true or literally false, sentence of the language. That is to say, our theories about the linguistic behavior of our fellows will suffice to let us cope with its utterance in the same unthinking way in which we cope with most of their other utterances.

The Davidsonian claim that metaphors do not have meanings may seem like a typical philosopher's quibble, but it is not.¹⁰ It is part of an attempt to get us to stop thinking of language as a medium. This, in turn, is part of a larger attempt to get rid of the traditional philosophical picture of what it is to be human. The importance of Davidson's point can perhaps best be seen by contrasting his treatment of metaphor with those of the Platonist and the positivist on the one hand and the Romantic on the other. The Platonist and the positivist share a reductionist view of metaphor: They think metaphors are either

paraphrasable or useless for the one serious purpose which language has, namely, representing reality. By contrast, the Romantic has an expansionist view: He thinks metaphor is strange, mystic, wonderful. Romantics attribute metaphor to a mysterious faculty called the "imagination," a faculty they suppose to be at the very center of the self, the deep heart's core. Whereas the metaphorical looks irrelevant to Platonists and positivists, the literal looks irrelevant to Romantics. For the former think that the point of language is to represent a hidden reality which lies outside us, and the latter thinks its purpose is to express a hidden reality which lies within us.

Positivist history of culture thus sees language as gradually shaping itself around the contours of the physical world. Romantic history of culture sees language as gradually bringing Spirit to self-consciousness. Nietzschean history of culture, and Davidsonian philosophy of language, see language as we now see evolution, as new forms of life constantly killing off old forms not to accomplish a higher purpose, but blindly. Whereas the positivist sees Galileo as making a discovery finally coming up with the words which were needed to fit the world properly, words Aristotle missed the Davidsonian sees him as having hit upon a tool which happened to work better for certain purposes than any previous tool. Once we found out what could be done with a Galilean vocabulary, nobody was much interested in doing the things which used to be done (and which Thomists thought should still be done) with an Aristotelian vocabulary.

Similarly, whereas the Romantic sees Yeats as having gotten at something which nobody had previously gotten at, expressed something which had long been yearning for expression, the Davidsonian sees him as having hit upon some tools which enabled him to write poems which were not just variations on the poems of his precursors. Once we had Yeats's later poems in hand, we were less interested in reading Rossetti's. What goes for revolutionary, strong scientists and poets goes also for strong philosophers people like Hegel and Davidson, the sort of philosophers who are interested in dissolving inherited problems rather than in solving them. In this view, substituting dialectic for demonstration as the method of philosophy, or getting rid of the correspondence theory of truth, is not a discovery about the nature of a preexistent entity called "philosophy" or "truth." It is changing the way we talk, and thereby changing what we want to do and what we think we are.

But in a Nietzschean view, one which drops the reality appearance distinction, to change how we talk is to change what, for our own purposes, we are. To say, with Nietzsche, that God is dead, is to say that we serve no higher purposes. The Nietzschean substitution of self creation for discovery substitutes a picture of the hungry generations treading each other down for a picture of humanity approaching closer and closer to the light. A culture

in which Nietzschean metaphors were literalized would be one which took for granted that philosophical problems are as temporary as poetic problems, that there are no problems which bind the generations together into a single natural kind called "humanity." A sense of human history as the history of successive metaphors would let us see the poet, in the generic sense of the maker of new words, the shaper of new languages, as the vanguard of the species.

I shall try to develop this last point in Chapters 2 and 3 in terms of Harold Bloom's notion of the "strong poet." But I shall end this first chapter by going back to the claim, which has been central to what I have been saying, that the world does not provide us with any criterion of choice between alternative metaphors, that we can only compare languages or metaphors with one another, not with something beyond language called "fact."

The only way to argue for this claim is to do what philosophers like Goodman, Putnam, and Davidson have done: exhibit the sterility of attempts to give a sense to phrases like "the way the world is" or "fitting the facts." Such efforts can be supplemented by the work of philosophers of science such as Kuhn and Hesse. These philosophers explain why there is no way to explain the fact that a Galilean vocabulary enables us to make better predictions than an Aristotelian vocabulary by the claim that the book of nature is written in the language of mathematics.

These sorts of arguments by philosophers of language and of science should be seen against the background of the work of intellectual historians: historians who, like Hans Blumenberg, have tried to trace the similarities and dissimilarities between the Age of Faith and the Age of Reason. These historians have made the point I mentioned earlier: The very idea that the world or the self has an intrinsic nature — one which the physicist or the poet may have glimpsed — is a remnant of the idea that the world is a divine creation, the work of someone who had something in mind, who Himself spoke some language in which He described His own project. Only if we have some such picture in mind, some picture of the universe as either itself a person or as created by a person, can we make sense of the idea that the world has an "intrinsic nature." For the cash value of that phrase is just that some vocabularies are better representations of the world than others, as opposed to being better tools for dealing with the world for one or another purpose.

To drop the idea of languages as representations, and to be thoroughly Wittgensteinian in our approach to language, would be to de-divinize the world. Only if we do that can we fully accept the argument I offered earlier — the argument that since truth is a property of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by human beings, so are truths. For as long as we think that "the world" names something we ought to respect as well as cope with, something person-like

in that it has a preferred description of itself, we shall insist that any philosophical account of truth save the "intuition" that truth is "out there." This institution amounts to the vague sense that it would be hubris on our part to abandon the traditional language of "respect for fact" and "objectivity" that it would be risky, and blasphemous, not to see the scientist (or the philosopher, or the poet, or somebody) as having a priestly function, as putting us in touch with a realm which transcends the human.

On the view I am suggesting, the claim that an "adequate" philosophical doctrine must make room for our intuitions is a reactionary slogan, one which begs the question at hand. 12 For it is essential to my view that we have no prelinguistic consciousness to which language needs to be adequate, no deep sense of how things are which it is the duty of philosophers to spell out in language. What is described as such a consciousness is simply a disposition to use the language of our ancestors, to worship the corpses of their metaphors. Unless we suffer from what Derrida calls "Heideggerian nostalgia," we shall not think of our "intuitions" as more than platitudes, more than the habitual use of a certain repertoire of terms, more than old tools which as yet have no replacements.

I can crudely sum up the story which historians like Blumenberg tell by saying that once upon a time we felt a need to worship something which lay beyond the visible world. Beginning in the seventeenth century we tried to substitute a love of truth for a love of God, treating the world described by science as a quasi-divinity. Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century we tried to substitute a love of ourselves for a love of scientific truth, a worship of our own deep spiritual or poetic nature, treated as one more quasi divinity.

The line of thought common to Blumenberg, Nietzsche, Freud, and Davidson suggests that we try to get to the point where we no longer worship anything, where we treat nothing as a quasi-divinity, where we treat everything our language, our conscience, our community as a product of time and chance. To reach this point would be, in Freud's words, to "treat chance as worthy of determining our fate." In the next chapter I claim that Freud, Nietzsche, and Bloom do for our conscience what Wittgenstein and Davidson do for our language, namely, exhibit its sheer contingency.

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Chapter 3: Metaphysics

What is the nature of existence?

Meta is a Greek preposition and prefix that invokes the notion of “beyond,” or perhaps “above.”¹⁸ *Physics* is a Greek noun denoting “Nature” or “the Cosmos.”¹⁹ As we discussed in the introduction, Philosophy historically has been inquiry into the Cosmos. However, we’ve had tremendous success in understanding how a great many aspects of the Cosmos work and we are good at predicting all sorts of behavior through this understanding. We’ve used empirical observation, deduction, and induction to figure all of this out.

However, there are questions that go beyond the limits of empirical observation. Here is a sampling of such questions.

- Is the universe and everything in it a function of one primary substance in varying forms or does arise out of a plurality of substances?
 - Restated, does the universe consist of matter-energy only or does it include things like spirit, consciousness, et cetera?
- How do we account for the appearance of change and permanence in our world? Which fundamentally describes reality? Is the other an illusion?
- Why does something exist rather than nothing?
- It seems like everything has a cause. How far back does the chain of causation go? Is there an uncaused cause or an infinite regress of causation?
- To what degree can a thing change and still retain its identity?
- If everything has a cause, is it possible for you and I to have a will that is free?
- Where is the you-that-is-you located along the mind-body spectrum?

Empirical observation alone seemingly cannot resolve these questions, but these

¹⁸ As a common preposition, meta can mean many things in different contexts, but in this context, we use it as it accompanies a noun in the accusative case. For more on the preposition as it functions in Greek, see “Greek Study Tool for Μετά,” Perseus, accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=meta&la=greek#Perseus:text:1999.04.0058:entry=meta/-contents>.

¹⁹ “Greek Word Study Tool for Φύσις,” Perseus, accessed April 20, 2018, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=fusis&la=greek#lexicon>.

questions are important and have implications for other questions we might ask (in areas like Epistemology, Ethics and Politics).

On Forms – Plato

From the *Parmenides Dialogue* by Plato

We had come from our home at Clazomenae to Athens and met Adeimantus and Glaucon in the Agora. Welcome, Cephalus, said Adeimantus, taking me by the hand; is there anything which we can do for you in Athens?

Yes; that is why I am here; I wish to ask a favor of you. What may that be? he said.

I want you to tell me the name of your half-brother, which I have forgotten; he was a mere child when I last came hither from Clazomenae, but that was a long time ago; his father's name, if I remember rightly, was Pyrilampes?

Yes, he said, and the name of our brother, Antiphon; but why do you ask?

Let me introduce some countrymen of mine, I said; they are lovers of philosophy, and have heard that Antiphon was intimate with a certain Pythodorus, a friend of Zeno, and remembers a conversation which took place between Socrates, Zeno, and Parmenides many years ago, Pythodorus having often recited it to him.

Quite true.

And could we hear it? I asked.

Nothing easier, he replied; when he was a youth he made a careful study of the piece; at present his thoughts run in another direction; like his grandfather Antiphon he is devoted to horses. But, if that is what you want, let us go and look for him; he dwells at Melita, which is quite near, and he has only just left us to go home.

Accordingly we went to look for him; he was at home, and in the act of giving a bridle to a smith to be fitted. When he had done with the smith, his brothers told him the purpose of our visit; and he saluted me as an acquaintance whom he remembered from my former visit, and we asked him to repeat the dialogue. At first, he was not very willing, and complained of the trouble, but at length he consented. He told us that Pythodorus had

described to him the appearance of Parmenides and Zeno; they came to Athens, as he said, at the great Panathenaea; the former was, at the time of his visit, about 65 years old, very white with age, but well favored. Zeno was nearly 40 years of age, tall and fair to look upon; in the days of his youth he was reported to have been beloved by Parmenides. He said that they lodged with Pythodorus in the Ceramicus, outside the wall, whither Socrates, then a very young man, came to see them, and many others with him; they wanted to hear the writings of Zeno, which had been brought to Athens for the first time on the occasion of their visit. These Zeno himself read to them in the absence of Parmenides, and had very nearly finished when Pythodorus entered, and with him Parmenides and Aristoteles who was afterwards one of the Thirty, and heard the little that remained of the dialogue. Pythodorus had heard Zeno repeat them before.

When the recitation was completed, Socrates requested that the first thesis of the first argument might be read over again, and this having been done, he said: What is your meaning, Zeno? Do you maintain that if being is many, it must be both like and unlike, and that this is impossible, for neither can the like be unlike, nor the unlike like—is that your position?

Just so, said Zeno.

And if the unlike cannot be like, or the like unlike, then according to you, being could not be many; for this would involve an impossibility. In all that you say have you any other purpose except to disprove the being of the many? And is not each division of your treatise intended to furnish a separate proof of this, there being in all as many proofs of the not being of the many as you have composed arguments? Is that your meaning, or have I misunderstood you?

No, said Zeno; you have correctly understood my general purpose.

I see, Parmenides, said Socrates, that Zeno would like to be not only one with you in friendship but your second self in his writings too; he puts what you say in another way, and would fain make believe that he is telling us something which is new. For you, in your poems, say The All is one, and of this you adduce excellent proofs; and he on the other hand says There is no many; and on behalf of this he offers overwhelming evidence. You affirm unity, he denies plurality. And so you deceive the world into believing that you are saying different things when really you are saying much the same. This is a strain of art beyond the reach of most of us.

Yes, Socrates, said Zeno. But although you are as keen as a Spartan hound in pursuing the track, you do not fully apprehend the true motive of the composition, which is not really

such an artificial work as you imagine; for what you speak of was an accident; there was no pretense of a great purpose; nor any serious intention of deceiving the world. The truth is, that these writings of mine were meant to protect the arguments of Parmenides against those who make fun of him and seek to show the many ridiculous and contradictory results which they suppose to follow from the affirmation of the one. My answer is addressed to the partisans of the many, whose attack I return with interest by retorting upon them that their hypothesis of the being of many, if carried out, appears to be still more ridiculous than the hypothesis of the being of one. Zeal for my master led me to write the book in the days of my youth, but someone stole the copy; and therefore I had no choice whether it should be published or not; the motive, however, of writing, was not the ambition of an elder man, but the pugnacity of a young one. This you do not seem to see, Socrates; though in other respects, as I was saying, your notion is a very just one.

I understand, said Socrates, and quite accept your account. But tell me, Zeno, do you not further think that there is an idea of likeness in itself, and another idea of unlikeness, which is the opposite of likeness, and that in these two, you and I and all other things to which we apply the term many, participate—things which participate in likeness become in that degree and manner like; and so far, as they participate in unlikeness become in that degree unlike, or both like and unlike in the degree in which they participate in both? And may not all things partake of both opposites, and be both like and unlike, by reason of this participation?—Where is the wonder? Now if a person could prove the absolute like to become unlike, or the absolute unlike to become like, that, in my opinion, would indeed be a wonder; but there is nothing extraordinary, Zeno, in showing that the things which only partake of likeness and unlikeness experience both. Nor, again, if a person were to show that all is one by partaking of one, and at the same time many by partaking of many, would that be very astonishing. But if he were to show me that the absolute one was many, or the absolute many one, I should be truly amazed. And so of all the rest: I should be surprised to hear that the natures or ideas themselves had these opposite qualities; but not if a person wanted to prove of me that I was many and also one. When he wanted to show that I was many he would say that I have a right and a left side, and a front and a back, and an upper and a lower half, for I cannot deny that I partake of multitude; when, on the other hand, he wants to prove that I am one, he will say, that we who are here assembled are seven, and that I am one and partake of the one. In both instances he proves his case. So again, if a person shows that such things as wood, stones, and the like, being many are also one, we admit that he shows the coexistence of the one and many, but he does not show that the many are one or the one many; he is uttering not a paradox but a truism. If however, as I just now suggested, someone were to abstract simple notions of like, unlike, one, many, rest, motion, and similar ideas, and then to show that these admit of admixture and separation in themselves, I should be very much

astonished. This part of the argument appears to be treated by you, Zeno, in a very spirited manner; but, as I was saying, I should be far more amazed if any one found in the ideas themselves which are apprehended by reason, the same puzzle and entanglement which you have shown to exist in visible objects.

While Socrates was speaking, Pythodorus thought that Parmenides and Zeno were not altogether pleased at the successive steps of the argument; but still they gave the closest attention, and often looked at one another, and smiled as if in admiration of him. When he had finished, Parmenides expressed their feelings in the following words:

Socrates, he said, I admire the bent of your mind towards philosophy; tell me now, was this your own distinction between ideas in themselves and the things which partake of them? and do you think that there is an idea of likeness apart from the likeness which we possess, and of the one and many, and of the other things which Zeno mentioned?

I think that there are such ideas, said Socrates.

Parmenides proceeded: And would you also make absolute ideas of the just and the beautiful and the good, and of all that class?

Yes, he said, I should.

And would you make an idea of man apart from us and from all other human creatures, or of fire and water?

I am often undecided, Parmenides, as to whether I ought to include them or not.

And would you feel equally undecided, Socrates, about things of which the mention may provoke a smile?—I mean such things as hair, mud, dirt, or anything else which is vile and paltry; would you suppose that each of these has an idea distinct from the actual objects with which we come into contact, or not?

Certainly not, said Socrates; visible things like these are such as they appear to us, and I am afraid that there would be an absurdity in assuming any idea of them, although I sometimes get disturbed, and begin to think that there is nothing without an idea; but then again, when I have taken up this position, I run away, because I am afraid that I may fall into a bottomless pit of nonsense, and perish; and so I return to the ideas of which I was just now speaking, and occupy myself with them.

Yes, Socrates, said Parmenides; that is because you are still young; the time will come, if I

am not mistaken, when philosophy will have a firmer grasp of you, and then you will not despise even the meanest things; at your age, you are too much disposed to regard the opinions of men. But I should like to know whether you mean that there are certain ideas of which all other things partake, and from which they derive their names; that similars, for example, become similar, because they partake of similarity; and great things become great, because they partake of greatness; and that just and beautiful things become just and beautiful, because they partake of justice and beauty?

Yes, certainly, said Socrates that is my meaning.

Then each individual partakes either of the whole of the idea or else of a part of the idea? Can there be any other mode of participation?

There cannot be, he said.

Then do you think that the whole idea is one, and yet, being one, is in each one of the many?

Why not, Parmenides? said Socrates.

Because one and the same thing will exist as a whole at the same time in many separate individuals, and will therefore be in a state of separation from itself.

Nay, but the idea may be like the day which is one and the same in many places at once, and yet continuous with itself; in this way each idea may be one and the same in all at the same time.

I like your way, Socrates, of making one in many places at once. You mean to say, that if I were to spread out a sail and cover a number of men, there would be one whole including many—is not that your meaning?

I think so.

And would you say that the whole sail includes each man, or a part of it only, and different parts different men?

The latter.

Then, Socrates, the ideas themselves will be divisible, and things which participate in them will have a part of them only and not the whole idea existing in each of them?

That seems to follow.

Then would you like to say, Socrates, that the one idea is really divisible and yet remains one?

Certainly not, he said.

Suppose that you divide absolute greatness, and that of the many great things, each one is great in virtue of a portion of greatness less than absolute greatness—is that conceivable?

No.

Or will each equal thing, if possessing some small portion of equality less than absolute equality, be equal to some other thing by virtue of that portion only?

Impossible.

Or suppose one of us to have a portion of smallness; this is but a part of the small, and therefore the absolutely small is greater; if the absolutely small be greater, that to which the part of the small is added will be smaller and not greater than before.

How absurd!

Then in what way, Socrates, will all things participate in the ideas, if they are unable to participate in them either as parts or wholes?

Indeed, he said, you have asked a question which is not easily answered.

Well, said Parmenides, and what do you say of another question?

What question?

I imagine that the way in which you are led to assume one idea of each kind is as follows: You see a number of great objects, and when you look at them there seems to you to be one and the same idea (or nature) in them all; hence you conceive of greatness as one.

Very true, said Socrates.

And if you go on and allow your mind in like manner to embrace in one view the idea of greatness and of great things which are not the idea, and to compare them, will not another greatness arise, which will appear to be the source of all these?

It would seem so.

Then another idea of greatness now comes into view over and above absolute greatness, and the individuals which partake of it; and then another, over and above all these, by virtue of which they will all be great, and so each idea instead of being one will be infinitely multiplied.

But may not the ideas, asked Socrates, be thoughts only, and have no proper existence except in our minds, Parmenides? For in that case each idea may still be one, and not experience this infinite multiplication.

And can there be individual thoughts which are thoughts of nothing?

Impossible, he said.

The thought must be of something?

Yes.

Of something which is or which is not?

Of something which is.

Must it not be of a single something, which the thought recognizes as attaching to all, being a single form or nature?

Yes.

And will not the something which is apprehended as one and the same in all, be an idea?

From that, again, there is no escape.

Then, said Parmenides, if you say that everything else participates in the ideas, must you not say either that everything is made up of thoughts, and that all things think; or that they are thoughts but have no thought?

The latter view, Parmenides, is no more rational than the previous one. In my opinion, the ideas are, as it were, patterns fixed in nature, and other things are like them, and resemblances of them—what is meant by the participation of other things in the ideas, is really assimilation to them.

But if, said he, the individual is like the idea, must not the idea also be like the individual, in so far as the individual is a resemblance of the idea? That which is like, cannot be conceived of as other than the like of like.

Impossible.

And when two things are alike, must they not partake of the same idea?

They must.

And will not that of which the two partake, and which makes them alike, be the idea itself?

Certainly.

Then the idea cannot be like the individual, or the individual like the idea; for if they are alike, some further idea of likeness will always be coming to light, and if that be like anything else, another; and new ideas will be always arising, if the idea resembles that which partakes of it?

Quite true.

The theory, then, that other things participate in the ideas by resemblance, has to be given up, and some other mode of participation devised?

It would seem so.

Do you see then, Socrates, how great is the difficulty of affirming the ideas to be absolute?

Yes, indeed.

And, further, let me say that as yet you only understand a small part of the difficulty which is involved if you make of each thing a single idea, parting it off from other things.

What difficulty? he said.

There are many, but the greatest of all is this:—If an opponent argues that these ideas, being such as we say they ought to be, must remain unknown, no one can prove to him that he is wrong, unless he who denies their existence be a man of great ability and knowledge, and is willing to follow a long and laborious demonstration; he will remain unconvinced, and still insist that they cannot be known.

What do you mean, Parmenides? said Socrates.

In the first place, I think, Socrates, that you, or any one who maintains the existence of absolute essences, will admit that they cannot exist in us.

No, said Socrates; for then they would be no longer absolute.

True, he said; and therefore when ideas are what they are in relation to one another, their essence is determined by a relation among themselves, and has nothing to do with the resemblances, or whatever they are to be termed, which are in our sphere, and from which we receive this or that name when we partake of them. And the things which are within our sphere and have the same names with them, are likewise only relative to one another, and not to the ideas which have the same names with them, but belong to themselves and not to them.

What do you mean? said Socrates.

I may illustrate my meaning in this way, said Parmenides:—A master has a slave; now there is nothing absolute in the relation between them, which is simply a relation of one man to another. But there is also an idea of mastership in the abstract, which is relative to the idea of slavery in the abstract. These natures have nothing to do with us, nor we with them; they are concerned with themselves only, and we with ourselves. Do you see my meaning?

Yes, said Socrates, I quite see your meaning.

And will not knowledge—I mean absolute knowledge—answer to absolute truth?

Certainly.

And each kind of absolute knowledge will answer to each kind of absolute being?

Yes.

But the knowledge which we have, will answer to the truth which we have; and again, each kind of knowledge which we have, will be a knowledge of each kind of being which we have?

Certainly.

But the ideas themselves, as you admit, we have not, and cannot have?

No, we cannot.

And the absolute natures or kinds are known severally by the absolute idea of knowledge?

Yes.

And we have not got the idea of knowledge?

No.

Then none of the ideas are known to us, because we have no share in absolute knowledge?

I suppose not.

Then the nature of the beautiful in itself, and of the good in itself, and all other ideas which we suppose to exist absolutely, are unknown to us?

It would seem so.

I think that there is a stranger consequence still.

What is it?

Would you, or would you not say, that absolute knowledge, if there is such a thing, must be a far more exact knowledge than our knowledge; and the same of beauty and of the rest?

Yes.

And if there be such a thing as participation in absolute knowledge, no one is more likely than God to have this most exact knowledge?

Certainly.

But then, will God, having absolute knowledge, have a knowledge of human things?

Why not?

Because, Socrates, said Parmenides, we have admitted that the ideas are not valid in relation to human things; nor human things in relation to them; the relations of either are limited to their respective spheres.

Yes, that has been admitted.

And if God has this perfect authority, and perfect knowledge, his authority cannot rule us, nor his knowledge know us, or any human thing; just as our authority does not extend to the gods, nor our knowledge know anything which is divine, so by parity of reason they, being gods, are not our masters, neither do they know the things of men.

Yet, surely, said Socrates, to deprive God of knowledge is monstrous.

These, Socrates, said Parmenides, are a few, and only a few of the difficulties in which we are involved if ideas really are and we determine each one of them to be an absolute unity. He who hears what may be said against them will deny the very existence of

them—and even if they do exist, he will say that they must of necessity be unknown to man; and he will seem to have reason on his side, and as we were remarking just now, will be very difficult to convince; a man must be gifted with very considerable ability before he can learn that everything has a class and an absolute essence; and still more remarkable will he be who discovers all these things for himself, and having thoroughly investigated them is able to teach them to others.

I agree with you, Parmenides, said Socrates; and what you say is very much to my mind.

And yet, Socrates, said Parmenides, if a man, fixing his attention on these and the like difficulties, does away with ideas of things and will not admit that every individual thing has its own determinate idea which is always one and the same, he will have nothing on which his mind can rest; and so he will utterly destroy the power of reasoning, as you seem to me to have particularly noted.

Very true, he said.

But, then, what is to become of philosophy? Whither shall we turn, if the ideas are unknown?

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Plato, “Parmenides Dialogue,” in *Plato in 12 Volumes*, trans. Harold North Flower, vol. 9, 12 vols. (London: Harvard University Press, 1966),
<http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0059.tlg009.perseus-eng1:126>.

On Emptiness and Being – Nagarjuna

From *Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way* by Nagarjuna

Examination of Conditions

1. Neither from itself nor from another,
Nor from both,
Nor without a cause,
Does anything whatever, anywhere arise.
2. There are four conditions: efficient condition;
Percept-object condition; immediate condition;
Dominant condition, just so. |
There is no fifth condition.
3. The essence of entities
Is not present in the conditions, etc.
If there is no essence,
There can be no otherness-essence.
4. Power to act does not have conditions.
There is no power to act without conditions.
There are no conditions without power to act.
Nor do any have the power to act.
5. These give rise to those,
So these are called conditions.
As long as those do not come from these,
Why are these not non-conditions?
6. For neither an existent nor a non-existent thing
Is a condition appropriate.
If a thing is non-existent, how could it have a condition?
If a thing is already existent, what would a condition do?

7. When neither existents nor
Non-existents nor existent non-existents are established,
How could one propose a “productive cause?”*
If there were one, it would be pointless.
8. An existent entity (mental episode)
Has no object.
Since a mental episode is without an object,
How could there be any percept-condition?
9. Since things are not arisen,
Cessation is not acceptable.
Therefore, an immediate condition is not reasonable.
If something has ceased, how could it be a condition?
10. If things did not exist
Without essence,
The phrase, “When this exists so this will be,”
Would not be acceptable.
11. In the several or united conditions
The effect cannot be found.
How could something not in the conditions
Come from the conditions?
12. However, if a nonexistent effect
Arises from these conditions,
Why does it not arise
From non-conditions?
13. If the effect’s essence is the conditions,
But the conditions don’t have their own essence,
How could an effect whose essence is the conditions
Come from something that is essence-less?
14. Therefore, neither with conditions as their essence,
Nor with non-conditions as their essence are there any effects.
If there are no such effects,
How could conditions or non-conditions be evident?

Examination of Motion

1. What has been moved is not moving.
What has not been moved is not moving.
Apart from what has been moved and what has not been moved,
Movement cannot be conceived.
2. Where there is change, there is motion.
Since there is change in the moving,
And not in the moved or not-moved,
Motion is in that which is moving.
3. How would it be acceptable
For motion to be in the mover?
When it is not moving, it is not acceptable
To call it a mover.
4. For whomever there is motion in the mover,
There could be non-motion
Evident in the mover.
But having motion follows from being a mover.
5. If motion is in the mover,
There would have to be a twofold motion:
One in virtue of which it is a mover,
And one in virtue of which it moves.
6. If there were a twofold motion,
The subject of that motion would be twofold.
For without a subject of motion,
There cannot be motion.
7. If without a mover
It would not be correct to say that there is motion,
Then if there were no motion,
How could there be a mover?
8. Inasmuch as a real mover does not move,
And a non-mover does not move,
Apart from a mover and a non-mover,

What third thing could move?

9. When without motion,
It is unacceptable to call something a mover,
How will it be acceptable
To say that a mover moves?
10. For him from whose perspective a mover moves,
There would be the consequence that
Without motion there could be a mover.
Because a mover moves.
11. If a mover were to move,
There would be a twofold motion:
One in virtue of which he is a mover,
And one in virtue of which the mover moves.
12. Motion does not begin in what has moved,
Nor does it begin in what has not moved,
Nor does it begin in what is moving.
In what, then, does motion begin?
13. Prior to the beginning of motion,
There is no beginning of motion in
The going or in the gone.
How could there be motion in the not-gone?
14. Since the beginning of motion
Cannot be conceived in any way,
What gone thing, what going thing,
And what non-going thing can be posited?
15. Just as a moving thing is not stationary,
A non-moving thing is not stationary.
Apart from the moving and the non-moving,
What third thing is stationary?
16. If without motion
It is not appropriate to posit a mover,
How could it be appropriate to say

That a moving thing is stationary?

17. One does not halt from moving,
Nor from having moved or not having moved.
Motion and coming to rest
And starting to move are similar.
18. That motion just is the mover itself
Is not correct.
Nor is it correct that
They are completely different.
19. It would follow from
The identity of mover and motion
That agent and action
Are identical.
20. It would follow from
A real distinction between motion and mover
That there could be a mover without motion
And motion without a mover.
21. When neither in identity
Nor in difference
Can they be established,
How can these two be established at all?
22. The motion by means of which a mover is manifest
Cannot be the motion by means of which he moves.
He does not exist before that motion.
So what and where is the thing that moves?
23. A mover does not carry out a different motion
From that by means of which he is manifest as a mover.
Moreover, in one mover
A twofold motion is unacceptable.
24. A really existent mover
Doesn't move in any of the three ways.
A non-existent mover

Doesn't move in any of the three ways.

25. Neither an entity nor a non-entity

Moves in any of the three ways.

So motion, mover and

And route are non-existent.

Examination of Elements

1. Prior to a characteristic of space

There is not the slightest space.

If it arose prior to the characteristic

Then it would, absurdly, arise without a characteristic.

2. A thing without a characteristic

Has never existed.

If nothing lacks a characteristic,

Where do characteristics come to be?

3. Neither in the uncharacterized nor in the characterized

Does a characteristic arise.

Nor does it arise

In something different from these two.

4. If characteristics do not appear,

Then it is not tenable to posit the characterized object.

If the characterized object is not posited,

There will be no characteristic either.

5. From this it follows that there is no characterized

And no existing characteristic.

Nor is there any entity

Other than the characterized and the characteristic.

6. If there is no existent thing.

Of what will there be nonexistence?

Apart from existent and nonexistent things

Who knows existence and nonexistence?

7. Therefore, space is not an entity.

It is not a nonentity.
Not characterized, not without character.
The same is true of the other five elements.

8. Fools and reificationists who perceive
The existence and nonexistence
Of objects
Do not see the pacification of objectification.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Jay L Garfield, “Nagarjuna’s Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way,” in *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*, ed. William Edelglass and Jay Garfield (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009), 26–34.

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On Categories – Aristotle

From *Categories* by Aristotle

Chapter 4

OF things not complex enunciated, each signifies either Substance, or Quantity, or Quality, or Relation, or Where, or When, or Position, or Possession, or Action, or Passion.
But

- Substance is, (to speak generally,) as “man,” “horse;”
- Quantity, as “two” or “three cubits;”
- Quality, as “white,” a “grammatical thing;”
- Relation, as “a double,” “a half,” “greater;”
- Where, as “in the Forum,” “in the Lyceum;”
- When, as “yesterday,” “last year;”
- Position, as “he reclines,” “he sits;”
- Possession, as “he is shod,” “he is armed;”
- Action, as “he cuts,” “he burns;”

- Being acted upon, as “he is cut,” “he is burnt.”

Now each of the above, considered by itself, is predicated neither affirmatively nor negatively, but from the connection of these with each other, affirmation or negation arises. For every affirmation or negation appears to be either true or false, but of things enunciated without any connection, none is either true or false, as “man,” “white,” “runs,” “conquers.”

Chapter 5

SUBSTANCE, in its strictest, first, and chief sense, is that which is neither predicated of any subject, nor is in any; as “a certain man” or “a certain horse.” But secondary substances are they, in which as species, those primarily named substances are inherent, that is to say, both these and the genera of these species; as “a certain man” exists in “man,” as in a species, but the genus of this species is “animal;” these, therefore, are termed secondary substances, as both “man” and “animal.” But it is evident, from what has been said, that of those things which are predicated of a subject, both the name and the definition must be predicated of the subject, as “man” is predicated of “some certain man,” as of a subject, and the name, at least, is predicated, for you will predicate “man” of “some certain man,” and the definition of man will be predicated of “some certain man,” for “a certain man” is both “man” and “animal;” wherefore both the name and the definition will be predicated of a subject. But of things which are in a subject for the most part, neither the name nor the definition is predicated of the subject, yet with some, there is nothing to prevent the name from being sometimes predicated of the subject, though the definition cannot be so; as “whiteness” being in a body, as in a subject, is predicated of the subject, (for the body is termed “white,”) but the definition of “whiteness” can never be predicated of body. All other things, however, are either predicated of primary substances, as of subjects, or are inherent in them as in subjects; this, indeed, is evident, from several obvious instances, thus “animal” is predicated of “man,” and therefore is also predicated of some “certain man,” for if it were predicated of no “man” particularly, neither could it be of “man” universally. Again, “color” is in “body,” therefore also is it in “some certain body,” for if it were not in “some one” of bodies singularly, it could not be in “body” universally; so that all other things are either predicated of primary substances as of subjects, or are inherent in them as in subjects; if therefore the primal substances do not exist, it is impossible that any one of the rest should exist.

But of secondary substances, species is more substance than genus; for it is nearer to the primary substance, and if any one explains what the primary substance is, he will explain it more clearly and appropriately by giving the species, rather than the genus; as a person

defining “a certain man” would do so more clearly, by giving “man” than “animal,” for the former is more the peculiarity of “a certain man,” but the latter is more common. In like manner, whoever explains what “a certain tree” is, will define it in a more known and appropriate manner, by introducing “tree” than “plant.” Besides the primary substances, because of their predicates; subjection to all other things, and these last being either predicated of them, or being in them, are for this reason, especially, termed substances. Yet the same relation as the primary substances bear to all other things, does species bear to genus, for species is subjected to genus since genera are predicated of species, but species are not reciprocally predicated of genera, whence the species is rather substance than the genus.

Of species themselves, however, as many as are not genera, are not more substance, one than another, for he will not give a more appropriate definition of “a certain man,” who introduces “man,” than he who introduces “horse,” into the definition of “a certain horse:” in like manner of primary substances, one is not more substance than another, for “a certain man” is not more substance than a “certain ox.” With reason therefore, after the first substances, of the rest, species and genera alone are termed secondary substances, since they alone declare the primary substances of the predicates; thus, if any one were to define what “a certain man” is, he would, by giving the species or the genus, define it appropriately, and will do so more clearly by introducing “man” than “animal;” but whatever else he may introduce, he will be introducing, in a manner, foreign to the purpose, as if he were to introduce “white,” or “runs,” or any thing else of the kind, so that with propriety of the others, these alone are termed substances. Moreover, the primary substances, because they are subject to all the rest, and all the others are predicated of, or exist in, these, are most properly termed substances, but the same relation which the primary substances bear to all other things, do the species and genera of the first substances bear to all the rest, since of these, are all the rest predicated, for you will say that “a certain man” is “a grammarian,” and therefore you will call both “man” and “animal” “a grammarian,” and in like manner of the rest.

It is common however to every substance, not to be in a subject, for neither is the primal substance in a subject, nor is it predicated of any; but of the secondary substances, that none of them is in a subject, is evident from this; “man” is predicated of “some certain” subject “man,” but is not in a subject, for “man” is not in “a certain man.”

So also “animal” is predicated of “some certain” subject “man,” but “animal” is not in “a certain man.” Moreover of those which are, in the subject, nothing prevents the name from being sometimes predicated of the subject, but that the definition should be predicated of it, is impossible. Of secondary substances however the definition and the

name are both predicated of the subject, for you will predicate the definition of “a man” concerning “a certain man,” and likewise the definition of “animal,” so that substance, may not be amongst the number, of those things which are in a subject.

This however is not the peculiarity of substance, but difference also is of the number of those things not in a subject; for “pedestrian” and “biped” are indeed predicated of “a man” as of a subject, but are not in a subject, for neither “biped” nor “pedestrian” is in “man.” The definition also of difference is predicated of that, concerning which, difference is predicated, so that if “pedestrian” be predicated of “man,” the definition also of “pedestrian” will be predicated of man, for “man” is “pedestrian.” Nor let the parts of substances, being in wholes as in subjects, perplex us, so that we should at any time be compelled to say, that they are not substances; for in this manner, things would not be said to be in a subject, which are in any as parts. It happens indeed both to substances and to differences alike, that all things should be predicated of them univocally, for all the categories from them are predicated either in respect of individuals or of species, since from the primary substance there is no category, for it is predicated in respect of no subject. But of secondary substances, species indeed is predicated in respect of the individual, but genus in respect to species and to individuals, so also differences are predicated as to species and as to individuals. Again, the primary substances take the definition of species and of genera, and the species the definition of the genus, for as many things as are said of the predicate, so many also will be said of the subject, likewise both the species and the individuals accept the definition of the differences: those things at least were univocal, of which the name is common and the definition the same, so that all which arise from substances and differences are predicated univocally.

Nevertheless every substance appears to signify this particular thing: as regards then the primary substances, it is unquestionably true that they signify a particular thing, for what is signified is individual, and one in number, but as regards the secondary substances, it appears in like manner that they signify this particular thing, by the figure of appellation, when any one says “man” or “animal,” yet it is not truly so, but rather they signify a certain quality, for the subject is not one, as the primary substance, but “man” and “animal” are predicated in respect of many. Neither do they signify simply a certain quality, as “white,” for “white” signifies nothing else but a thing of a certain quality, but the species and the genus determine the quality, about the substance, for they signify what quality a certain substance possesses: still a wider limit is made by genus than by species, for whoever speaks of “animal,” comprehends more than he who speaks of “man.”

It belongs also to substances that there is no contrary to them, since what can be contrary

to the primary substance, as to a certain “man,” or to a certain “animal,” for there is nothing contrary either at least to “man” or to “animal?” Now this is not the peculiarity of substance, but of many other things, as for instance of quantity; for there is no contrary to “two” cubits nor to “three” cubits, nor to “ten,” nor to any thing of the kind, unless some one should say that “much” is contrary to “little,” or “the great” to “the small;” but of definite quantities, none is contrary to the other. Substance, also, appears not to receive greater or less; I mean, not that one substance is not, more or less, substance, than another, for it has been already said that it is, but that every substance is not said to be more or less, that very thing, that it is; as if the same substance be “man” he will not be more or less “man;” neither himself than himself, nor another “man” than another, for one “man” is not more “man” than another, as one “white thing” is more and less “white” than another, and one “beautiful” thing more and less “beautiful” than another, and “the same thing” more or less than “itself;” so a body being “white,” is said to be more “white” now, than it was before, and if “warm” is said to be more or less “warm.” Substance at least is not termed more or less substance, since “man” is not said to be more “man” now, than before, nor any one of such other things as are substances: hence substance is not capable of receiving the greater and the less.

It appears however, to be especially the peculiarity of substance, that being one and the same in number, it can receive contraries, which no one can affirm of the rest which are not substances, as that being one in number, they are capable of contraries. Thus “color,” which is one and the same in number, is not “white” and “black,” neither the same action, also one in number, both bad and good; in like manner of other things as many as are not substances. But substance being one, and the same in number, can receive contraries, as “a certain man” being one and the same, is at one time, white, and at another, black, and warm and cold, and bad and good. In respect of none of the rest does such a thing appear, except some one should object, by saying, that a sentence and opinion are capable of receiving contraries, for the same sentence appears to be true and false; thus if the statement be true that “some one sits,” when he stands up, this very same statement will be false. And in a similar manner in the matter of opinion, for if any one should truly opine that a certain person sits, when he rises up he will opine falsely, if he still holds the same opinion about him. Still, if any one, should even admit this, yet there is a difference in the mode. For some things in substances, being themselves changed, are capable of contraries, since cold, being made so, from hot, has changed, for it is changed in quality, and black from white, and good from bad: in like manner as to other things, each one of them receiving change is capable of contraries. The sentence indeed and the opinion remain themselves altogether immovable, but the thing being moved, a contrary is produced about them; the sentence indeed remains the same, that “some one sits,” but the thing being moved, it becomes at one time, true, and at another, false. Likewise as to

opinion, so that in this way, it will be the peculiarity of substance, to receive contraries according to the change in itself, but if any one admitted this, that a sentence and opinion can receive contraries, this would not be true. For the sentence and the opinion are not said to be capable of contraries in that they have received any thing, but, in that about something else, a passive quality has been produced, for in that a thing is, or is not, in this, is the sentence said to be true, or false, not in that itself, is capable of contraries. In short, neither is a sentence nor an opinion moved by any thing, whence they cannot be capable of contraries, no passive quality being in them; substance at least, from the fact of itself receiving contraries, is said in this to be capable of contraries, for it receives disease and health, whiteness and blackness, and so long as it receives each of these, it is said to be capable of receiving contraries. Wherefore it will be the peculiarity of substance, that being the same, and one in number, according to change in itself, it is capable of receiving contraries; and concerning substance this may suffice.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Aristotle, "Categories," trans. E. M. Edghill, *The Internet Classics Archive*, accessed May 31, 2018, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/categories.1.1.html>.

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On the Dao – Lao-Tzu

Selections from *The Dao De Jing* by Lao-Tzu

Chapter 1

1. The Dao²¹ that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name.
2. (Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived

²⁰ The Internet Classics Archive claims that all of the texts on its site are in the Public Domain to the best of their knowledge. See < <http://classics.mit.edu/Help/general.html> > for more.

²¹ The Chinese word for "the way" / "the path" was Romanized (transliterated into Latin) as Tao initially and since the 20th Century as Dao. Dao and Tao are interchangeable and so you'll sometimes see Tao Te Ching instead of Dao De Jing. They are the same.

of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things.

3. Always without desire we must be found,
If its deep mystery we would sound;
But if desire always within us be,
Its outer fringe is all that we shall see.
4. Under these two aspects, it is really the same; but as development takes place, it receives the different names. Together we call them the Mystery. Where the Mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful

Chapter 2

1. All in the world know the beauty of the beautiful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what ugliness is; they all know the skill of the skillful, and in doing this they have (the idea of) what the want of skill is.
2. So it is that existence and nonexistence give birth the one to (the idea of) the other; that difficulty and ease produce the one (the idea of) the other; that length and shortness fashion out the one the figure of the other; that (the ideas of) height and lowness arise from the contrast of the one with the other; that the musical notes and tones become harmonious through the relation of one with another; and that being before and behind give the idea of one following another.
3. Therefore the sage manages affairs without doing anything, and conveys his instructions without the use of speech.
4. All things spring up, and there is not one which declines to show itself; they grow, and there is no claim made for their ownership; they go through their processes, and there is no expectation (of a reward for the results). The work is accomplished, and there is no resting in it (as an achievement). The work is done, but how no one can see; 'Tis this that makes the power not cease to be

Chapter 11

1. The thirty spokes unite in the one nave; but it is on the empty space (for the axle), that the use of the wheel depends. Clay is fashioned into vessels; but it is on their empty hollowness, that their use depends. The door and windows are cut out (from the walls) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (within), that its use depends. Therefore, what has a (positive) existence serves for profitable adaptation, and what has not that for (actual) usefulness

Chapter 14

1. We look at it, and we do not see it, and we name it “the Equable.” We listen to it, and we do not hear it, and we name it “the Inaudible.” We try to grasp it, and do not get hold of it, and we name it “the Subtle.” With these three qualities, it cannot be made the subject of description; and hence we blend them together and obtain The One.
2. Its upper part is not bright, and its lower part is not obscure. Ceaseless in its action, it yet cannot be named, and then it again returns and becomes nothing. This is called the Form of the Formless, and the Semblance of the Invisible; this is called the Fleeting and Indeterminable.
3. We meet it and do not see its Front; we follow it, and do not see its Back. When we can lay hold of the Dao of old to direct the things of the present day, and are able to know it as it was of old in the beginning, this is called (unwinding) the clue of Dao

Chapter 22

1. The partial becomes complete; the crooked, straight; the empty, full; the worn out, new. He whose (desires) are few gets them; he whose (desires) are many goes astray.
2. Therefore the sage holds in his embrace the one thing (of humility), and manifests it to all the world. He is free from self-display, and therefore he shines; from self-assertion, and therefore he is distinguished; from self-boasting, and therefore his merit is acknowledged; from self-complacency, and therefore he acquires superiority. It is because he is thus free from striving that therefore no one in the world is able to strive with him.
3. That saying of the ancients that “the partial becomes complete” was not vainly spoken:—all real completion is comprehended under it

Chapter 23

1. Abstaining from speech marks him who is obeying the spontaneity of his nature. A violent wind does not last for a whole morning; a sudden rain does not last for the whole day. To whom is it that these (two) things are owing? To Heaven and Earth. If Heaven and Earth cannot make such (spasmodic) actings last long, how much less can man!
2. Therefore when one is making the Dao his business, those who are also pursuing it, agree with him in it, and those who are making the manifestation of its course their object agree with him in that; while even those who are failing in both these things agree with him where they fail.

3. Hence, those with whom he agrees as to the Dao have the happiness of attaining to it; those with whom he agrees as to its manifestation have the happiness of attaining to it; and those with whom he agrees in their failure have also the happiness of attaining (to the Tao). (But) when there is not faith sufficient (on his part), a want of faith (in him) ensues (on the part of the others)

Chapter 24

He who stands on his tiptoes does not stand firm; he who stretches his legs does not walk (easily). (So), he who displays himself does not shine; he who asserts his own views is not distinguished; he who vaunts himself does not find his merit acknowledged; he who is self-conceited has no superiority allowed to him. Such conditions, viewed from the standpoint of the Tao, are like remnants of food, or a tumor on the body, which all dislike. Hence those who pursue (the course) of the Dao do not adopt and allow them

Chapter 25

1. There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before Heaven and Earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone, and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted)! It may be regarded as the Mother of all things.
2. I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Dao (the Way or Course). Making an effort (further) to give it a name I call it The Great.
3. Great, it passes on (in constant flow). Passing on, it becomes remote. Having become remote, it returns. Therefore the Dao is great; Heaven is great; Earth is great; and the (sage) king is also great. In the universe there are four that are great, and the (sage) king is one of them.
4. Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tao. The law of the Dao is its being what it is

Chapter 32

1. The Tao, considered as unchanging, has no name.
2. Though in its primordial simplicity it may be small, the whole world dares not deal with (one embodying) it as a minister. If a feudal prince or the king could guard and hold it, all would spontaneously submit themselves to him.
3. Heaven and Earth (under its guidance) unite together and send down the sweet dew,

which, without the directions of men, reaches equally everywhere as of its own accord.

4. As soon as it proceeds to action, it has a name. When it once has that name, (men) can know to rest in it. When they know to rest in it, they can be free from all risk of failure and error.
5. The relation of the Dao to all the world is like that of the great rivers and seas to the streams from the valleys

Chapter 37

1. The Dao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it), and so there is nothing which it does not do.
2. If princes and kings were able to maintain it, all things would of themselves be transformed by them.
3. If this transformation became to me an object of desire, I would express the desire by the nameless simplicity. Simplicity without a name Is free from all external aim. With no desire, at rest and still, All things go right as of their will.

Chapter 40

1. The movement of the Dao
By contraries proceeds;
And weakness marks the course
Of Tao's mighty deeds.
2. All things under heaven sprang from It as existing (and named); that existence sprang from It as nonexistent (and not named)

Chapter 43

1. The softest thing in the world dashes against and overcomes the hardest; that which has no (substantial) existence enters where there is no crevice. I know hereby what advantage belongs to doing nothing (with a purpose).
2. There are few in the world who attain to the teaching without words, and the advantage arising from nonaction

Chapter 46

1. When the Dao prevails in the world, they send back their swift horses to (draw) the dung carts. When the Dao is disregarded in the world, the warhorses breed in the border lands.
2. There is no guilt greater than to sanction ambition; no calamity greater than to be discontented with one's lot; no fault greater than the wish to be getting. Therefore the sufficiency of contentment is an enduring and unchanging sufficiency

Chapter 47

1. Without going outside his door, one understands (all that takes place) under the sky; without looking out from his window, one sees the Dao of Heaven. The farther that one goes out (from himself), the less he knows.
2. Therefore the sages got their knowledge without travelling; gave their (right) names to things without seeing them; and accomplished their ends without any purpose of doing so

Chapter 48

1. He who devotes himself to learning (seeks) from day to day to increase (his knowledge); he who devotes himself to the Dao (seeks) from day to day to diminish (his doing).
2. He diminishes it and again diminishes it, till he arrives at doing nothing (on purpose). Having arrived at this point of nonaction, there is nothing which he does not do.
3. He who gets as his own all under heaven does so by giving himself no trouble (with that end). If one take trouble (with that end), he is not equal to getting as his own all under heaven

Chapter 49

1. The sage has no invariable mind of his own; he makes the mind of the people his mind.
2. To those who are good (to me), I am good; and to those who are not good (to me), I am also good;—and thus (all) get to be good. To those who are sincere (with me), I am sincere; and to those who are not sincere (with me), I am also sincere;—and thus (all) get to be sincere.
3. The sage has in the world an appearance of indecision, and keeps his mind in a state of indifference to all. The people all keep their eyes and ears directed to him, and he deals with them all as his children

Chapter 50

1. Men come forth and live; they enter (again) and die.
2. Of every ten three are ministers of life (to themselves); and three are ministers of death.
3. There are also three in every ten whose aim is to live, but whose movements tend to the land (or place) of death. And for what reason? Because of their excessive endeavors to perpetuate life.
4. But I have heard that he who is skillful in managing the life entrusted to him for a time travels on the land without having to shun rhinoceros or tiger, and enters a host without having to avoid buff coat or sharp weapon. The rhinoceros finds no place in him into which to thrust its horn, nor the tiger a place in which to fix its claws, nor the weapon a place to admit its point. And for what reason? Because there is in him no place of death

Chapter 51

1. All things are produced by the Tao, and nourished by its outflowing operation. They receive their forms according to the nature of each, and are completed according to the circumstances of their condition. Therefore all things without exception honor the Tao, and exalt its outflowing operation.
2. This honoring of the Dao and exalting of its operation is not the result of any ordination, but always a spontaneous tribute.
3. Thus it is that the Dao produces (all things), nourishes them, brings them to their full growth, nurses them, completes them, matures them, maintains them, and overspreads them.
4. It produces them and makes no claim to the possession of them; it carries them through their processes and does not vaunt its ability in doing so; it brings them to maturity and exercises no control over them;—this is called its mysterious operation

Chapter 56

1. He who knows (the Tao) does not (care to) speak (about it); he who is (ever ready to) speak about it does not know it.
2. He (who knows it) will keep his mouth shut and close the portals (of his nostrils). He

will blunt his sharp points and unravel the complications of things; he will attemper his brightness, and bring himself into agreement with the obscurity (of others). This is called "the Mysterious Agreement."

3. (Such a one) cannot be treated familiarly or distantly; he is beyond all consideration of profit or injury; of nobility or meanness: —he is the noblest man under heaven

Chapter 63

1. (It is the way of the Tao) to act without (thinking of) acting; to conduct affairs without (feeling the) trouble of them; to taste without discerning any flavor; to consider what is small as great, and a few as many; and to recompense injury with kindness.
2. (The master of it) anticipates things that are difficult while they are easy, and does things that would become great while they are small. All difficult things in the world are sure to arise from a previous state in which they were easy, and all great things from one in which they were small. Therefore the sage, while he never does what is great, is able on that account to accomplish the greatest things.
3. He who lightly promises is sure to keep but little faith; he who is continually thinking things easy is sure to find them difficult. Therefore the sage sees difficulty even in what seems easy, and so never has any difficulties

Chapter 64

1. That which is at rest is easily kept hold of; before a thing has given indications of its presence, it is easy to take measures against it; that which is brittle is easily broken; that which is very small is easily dispersed. Action should be taken before a thing has made its appearance; order should be secured before disorder has begun.
2. The tree which fills the arms grew from the tiniest sprout; the tower of nine stories rose from a (small) heap of earth; the journey of a thousand li commenced with a single step.
3. He who acts (with an ulterior purpose) does harm; he who takes hold of a thing (in the same way) loses his hold. The sage does not act (so), and therefore does no harm; he does not lay hold (so), and therefore does not lose his hold. (But) people in their conduct of affairs are constantly ruining them when they are on the eve of success. If they were careful at the end, as (they should be) at the beginning, they would not so ruin them.
4. Therefore the sage desires what (other men) do not desire, and does not prize things

difficult to get; he learns what (other men) do not learn, and turns back to what the multitude of men have passed by. Thus he helps the natural development of all things, and does not dare to act (with an ulterior purpose of his own)

Chapter 72

1. When the people do not fear what they ought to fear, that which is their great dread will come on them.
2. Let them not thoughtlessly indulge themselves in their ordinary life; let them not act as if weary of what that life depends on.
3. It is by avoiding such indulgence that such weariness does not arise.
4. Therefore the sage knows (these things) of himself, but does not parade (his knowledge); loves, but does not (appear to set a) value on, himself. And thus he puts the latter alternative away and makes choice of the former

Chapter 77

1. May not the Way (or Tao) of Heaven be compared to the (method of) bending a bow? The (part of the bow) which was high is brought low, and what was low is raised up. (So Heaven) diminishes where there is superabundance, and supplements where there is deficiency.
2. It is the Way of Heaven to diminish superabundance, and to supplement deficiency. It is not so with the way of man. He takes away from those who have not enough to add to his own superabundance.
3. Who can take his own superabundance and therewith serve all under heaven? Only he who is in possession of the Tao!
4. Therefore the (ruling) sage acts without claiming the results as his; he achieves his merit and does not rest (arrogantly) in it:—he does not wish to display his superiority

Chapter 78

1. There is nothing in the world more soft and weak than water, and yet for attacking things that are firm and strong there is nothing that can take precedence of it;—for there is nothing (so effectual) for which it can be changed.
2. Every one in the world knows that the soft overcomes the hard, and the weak the

strong, but no one is able to carry it out in practice.

3. Therefore a sage has said,
 “He who accepts his state’s reproach,
 Is hailed therefore its altars’ lord;
 To him who bears men’s direful woes
 They all the name of King accord.”
4. Words that are strictly true seem to be paradoxical.

Chapter 79

1. When a reconciliation is effected (between two parties) after a great animosity, there is sure to be a grudge remaining (in the mind of the one who was wrong). And how can this be beneficial (to the other)?
2. Therefore (to guard against this), the sage keeps the left-hand portion of the record of the engagement, and does not insist on the (speedy) fulfilment of it by the other party. (So), he who has the attributes (of the Tao) regards (only) the conditions of the engagement, while he who has not those attributes regards only the conditions favorable to himself.
3. In the Way of Heaven, there is no partiality of love; it is always on the side of the good man

Chapter 81

1. Sincere words are not fine; fine words are not sincere. Those who are skilled (in the Tao) do not dispute (about it); the disputatious are not skilled in it. Those who know (the Tao) are not extensively learned; the extensively learned do not know it.
2. The sage does not accumulate (for himself). The more that he expends for others, the more does he possess of his own; the more that he gives to others, the more does he have himself.
3. With all the sharpness of the Way of Heaven, it injures not; with all the doing in the way of the sage he does not strive.

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On Identity and diversity – John Locke

From Chapter 27 of Book II in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

1. Another context in which the mind compares things [= 'considers things together'] is their very being: when we consider something as existing at a given time and place and compare it with itself existing at another time, we are led to form the ideas of identity and diversity. [In this context 'diversity' means 'nonidentity.' To say that x is diverse from y is to say only that x is not y.] When we see a thing—anything, of whatever sort—to be in a certain place at a certain time, we are sure that it is that very thing and not another thing existing at that time in some other place, however alike the two may be in all other respects. And in this consists identity, when the ideas to which it is attributed do not vary from what they were at the moment of their former existence that we are comparing with the present. We never find—and cannot even conceive of—two things of the same kind existing in the same place at the same time, so we rightly conclude that whatever exists in a certain place at a certain time excludes all others of the same kind, and is there itself alone. So, when we ask whether a thing is 'the same' or not, we are always referring to something that existed at a given time in a given place, a thing that at that instant was certainly the same as itself and not the same as anything else. From this it follows that

- one thing cannot have two beginnings of existence because it is impossible for one thing to be in different places at the same time and
- two things cannot have one beginning, because it is impossible for two things of the same kind to exist in the same instant at the very same place.

Thus, what had one beginning is the same thing; and what had a different beginning in time and place from that is not the same but diverse. The difficulties philosophers have had with this relation of identity have arisen from their not attending carefully to the precise notions of the things to which it is attributed.

2. We have ideas of only three sorts of substances: God, finite intelligences, and bodies.

1. 1 God is without beginning, eternal, unalterable, and everywhere; and so

there can be no doubt concerning his identity.

2. 2 Each finite spirit had its determinate time and place of beginning to exist, so its relation to that time and place will always determine its identity for as long as it exists.
3. 3 The same holds for every particle of matter, which continues as the same as long as no matter is added to or removed from it. . .

These three sorts of 'substances' (as we call them) don't exclude one another out of the same place, but we can't conceive any of them allowing another of the same kind into its place. If that were to happen, the notions and names of identity and diversity would be useless, and there would be no way of distinguishing substances or anything else from one another. For example: if two bodies could be in the same place at the same time, then those two portions of matter would be one and the same, whatever their size. Indeed, all bodies would be one and the same, because allowing two bodies to be in one place at one time allows for all bodies to do so. To suppose this to be possible is to obliterate the distinction between identity and diversity, the difference between one and more....

That all concerned the identity of substances. There remain modes and relations, but because they ultimately depend on substances [Locke says they are 'ultimately terminated in substances'], the identity and diversity of each particular one of them will be determined in the same way as the identity of particular substances. Questions of identity and diversity do not arise for things whose existence consists in a sequence of events such as the actions of finite beings, e.g. motion and thought. Because each of these events perishes the moment it begins, they cannot exist at different times or in different places, as enduring things can; and therefore, no motion or thought can be the same as any earlier motion or thought.

3. There has been much enquiry after the principle of individuation; but what I have said enables us easily to discover what that is: it is existence itself, which ties a being of a given sort to a particular time and place that cannot be shared by any other being of the same kind. This seems easier to conceive in simple substances or modes, but if we are careful we can just as easily apply it to compound ones. Consider an atom, i.e. a continued body under one unchanging surface, existing at a particular time and place: it is evident that at that instant it is the same as itself. For being at that instant what it is and nothing else, it is the same and so must continue as long as its existence is continued; for so long it will be the same and no other. [That sentence is Locke's.] Similarly, if two or more atoms are joined together into a single mass, every one of those atoms will be the same by the foregoing rule. And while they exist united together, the mass whose parts they are must be the same mass, or the same body, however much the parts have been re arranged.

But if one atom is removed from the mass, or one new one added, it is no longer the same mass, or the same body. The identity of living creatures depends not on a mass of the same particles but on something else. For in them the variation of large amounts of matter does not alter the identity. An oak growing from a sapling to a great tree, and then lopped, is still the same oak; and a colt grown up to be a horse, sometimes fat, sometimes lean, is the same horse throughout all this. In neither case is there the same mass of matter, though there truly is the same oak, or horse. That is because in these two cases, a mass of matter and a living body, identity is not applied to the same thing.

4. How, then, does an oak differ from a mass of matter? The answer seems to me to be this: the mass is merely the cohesion of particles of matter anyhow united, whereas the oak is such a disposition of particles as constitutes the parts of an oak, and an organization of those parts that enables the whole to receive and distribute nourishment so as to continue and form the wood, bark, and leaves, etc. of an oak, in which consists the vegetable life. Thus, something is one plant if it has an organization of parts in one cohering body partaking of one common life, and it continues to be the same plant as long as it partakes of the same life, even if that life is passed along to new particles of matter vitally united to the living plant, in a similar continued organization suitable for that sort of plants. This organization is at any one instant in some one collection of matter, which distinguishes it from all others at that instant; and what has the identity that makes the same plant is that individual life, existing constantly from that moment forwards and backwards, in the same continuity of imperceptibly succeeding parts united to the living body of the plant. It also makes all the parts of it be parts of the same plant, for as long as they exist united in that continued organization that is fit to convey that common life to all the parts so united.

5. The identity of lower animals is sufficiently like that for anyone to be able to see, from what I have said, what makes one animal and continues it the same. It can be illustrated by something similar, namely the identity of machines. What is a watch? Clearly it is nothing, but a construction of parts organized to a certain end—an end that it can attain when sufficient force is applied to it. If we suppose this machine to be one continued body whose parts were repaired, added to, or subtracted from, by a constant addition or separation of imperceptible parts, with one common life, it would be very much like the body of an animal; with the difference that in an animal the fitness of the organization and the motion wherein life consists begin together, because the motion comes from within; but in a machine the force can be seen to come from outside, and is often lacking even when the machine is in order and well fitted to receive it— for example, when a clock isn't wound up.

6. This also shows what the identity of the same man consists in, namely: a participation in the same continued life by constantly fleeting particles of matter that are successively vitally united to the same organized body. If you place the identity of man in anything but this, you will find it hard to make an embryo and an adult the same man, or a well man and a madman the same man.

Your only chance of doing this is by tying 'same man' to 'same soul,' but by that standard you will make it possible for Seth, Ismael, Socrates, Pilate, St. Augustine, and Cesare Borgia to be the same man. If identity of soul alone makes the same man, and nothing in the nature of matter rules out an individual spirit's being united to different bodies, it will be possible that those men with their different characters and living at widely different times, may have been the same man! That strange way of using the word 'man' is what one is led to by giving it a meaning from which body and shape are excluded. ...

7. So unity of substance does not constitute all sorts of identity. To conceive and judge correctly about identity, we must consider what idea the word it is applied to stands for: it is one thing to be the same substance, another the same man, and a third the same person, if 'person', 'man', and 'substance' are names for three different ideas; for such as is the idea belonging to that name, such must be the identity. If this had been more carefully attended to, it might have prevented a great deal of that confusion that often occurs regarding identity, and especially personal identity, to which I now turn after one more section on 'same man.'

8. An animal is a living organized body; and consequently, the same animal, as I have said, is the same continued life communicated to different particles of matter, as they are successively united to that organized living body. And whatever other definitions are propounded, there should be no doubt that the word 'man' as we use it stands for the idea of an animal of a certain form. The time hallowed definition of 'man' as 'rational animal' is wrong.

If we should see a creature of our own shape and physical constitution, though it had no more reason all its life than a cat or a parrot, we would still call him a man; and anyone who heard a cat or a parrot talk, reason, and philosophize would still think it to be a cat or a parrot and would describe it as such. One of these two is

- a dull, irrational man, the other
- a very intelligent rational parrot.

[Locke then quotes a tediously long traveler's tale about encountering a rational parrot. His point is that someone who believes this account will go thinking of this rational

animal as a parrot, not as a man.]

9. With 'same man' in hand, let us turn to 'same person'. To find what personal identity consists in, we must consider what 'person' stands for.

I think it is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing at different times and places. What enables it to think of itself is its consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking and (it seems to me) essential to it.

It is impossible for anyone to perceive, without perceiving that he perceives. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so. It is always like that with our present sensations and perceptions. And it is through this that everyone is to himself that which he calls 'self, not raising the question of whether the same self is continued in the same substance.

Consciousness always accompanies thinking, and makes everyone to be what he calls 'self' and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things; in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being; and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now that it was then; and this present self that now reflects on it is the one by which that action was performed.

10. Given that it is the same person, is it the same identical substance? Most people would think that it is the same substance if these perceptions with their consciousness always remained present in the mind, making the same thinking thing always consciously present and (most people would think) evidently the same to itself. What seems to make the difficulty— that is, to make it at least questionable whether the same person must be the same substance— is the following fact.

Consciousness is often interrupted by forgetfulness, and at no moment of our lives do we have the whole sequence of all our past actions before our eyes in one view; even the best memories lose the sight of one part while they are viewing another.

Furthermore, for the greatest part of our lives we don't reflect on our past selves at all, because we are intent on our present thoughts or (in sound sleep) have no thoughts at all, or at least none with the consciousness that characterizes our waking thoughts. In all these cases our consciousness is interrupted, and we lose the sight of our past selves, and so doubts are raised as to whether or not we are the same thinking thing, i.e. the same substance.

That may be a reasonable question, but it has nothing to do with personal identity. For the latter, the question is about what makes the same person, and not whether the same identical substance always thinks in the same person. Different substances might all partake in a single consciousness and thereby be united into one person, just as different bodies can enter into the same life and thereby be united into one animal, whose identity is preserved throughout that change of substances by the unity of the single continued life. What makes a man be himself to himself is sameness of consciousness, so personal identity depends entirely on that—whether the consciousness is tied to one substance throughout or rather is continued in a series of different substances. For as far as any thinking being can repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness that he had of it at first, and with the same consciousness he has of his present actions, so far is he the same personal self. For it is by the consciousness he has of his present thoughts and actions that he is self to himself now, and so will be the same self as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come. Distance of time doesn't make him two or more persons, and nor does change of substance; any more than a man is made to be two men by having a long or short sleep or by changing his clothes.

11. Our own bodies give us some kind of evidence for this. All the particles of your body, while they are vitally united to a single thinking conscious self—so that you feel when they are touched, and are affected by and conscious of good or harm that happens to them—are a part of yourself, i.e. of your thinking conscious self. Thus, the limbs of his body are to everyone a part of himself; he feels for them and is concerned for them. Cut off a hand and thereby separate it from that consciousness the person had of its heat, cold, and other states, and it is then no longer a part of himself, any more than is the remotest material thing. Thus, we see the substance of which the personal self consisted at one time may be varied at another without change of personal identity; for there is no doubt that it is the same person, even though one of its limbs has been cut off.

12. But it is asked: Can it be the same person if the substance changes? and Can it be different persons if the same substance does the thinking throughout?

Before I address these questions in sections 13 and 14, there's a preliminary point I want to make. It is that neither question is alive for those who hold that thought is a property of a purely material animal constitution, with no immaterial substance being involved. Whether or not they are right about that, they obviously conceive personal identity as being preserved in something other than identity of substance; just as animal identity is preserved in identity of life, not of substance. This pair of questions does present a challenge to

- those who hold that only immaterial substances can think,

- and that sameness of person requires sameness of immaterial substance.

Before they can confront their materialist opponents, they have to show why personal identity can't be preserved through a change of immaterial substances, just as animal identity is preserved through a change of material substances. Unless they say that what makes the same life and thus the animal identity in lower animals is one immaterial spirit, just as (according to them) one immaterial spirit makes the same person in men—and Cartesians at least won't take that way out, for fear of making the lower animals thinking things too.

13. As to the first question, If the thinking substance is changed, can it be the same person? I answer that this can be settled only by those who know

- what kind of substances they are that think, and
- whether the consciousness of past actions can be transferred from one such substance to another.

Admittedly, if the same consciousness were the same individual action, it couldn't be transferred because in that case bringing a past headache (say) into one's consciousness would be bringing back that very headache, and that is tied to the substance to which it occurred. But a present consciousness of a past event isn't like that. Rather it is a present representation of a past action, and we have still to be shown why something can't be represented to the mind as having happened though really it did not. How far the consciousness of past actions is tied to one individual agent, so that another can't possibly have it, will be hard for us to determine until we know what kind of action it is that can't be done without a reflex act of perception accompanying it, and how such an action is done by thinking substances who can't think without being conscious of it. In our present state of knowledge, it is hard to see how it can be impossible, in the nature of things, for an intellectual substance to have represented to it as done by itself something that it never did, and was perhaps done by some other agent.... Until we have a clearer view of the nature of thinking substances, we had better assume that such changes of substance within a single person never do in fact happen, basing this on the goodness of God. Having a concern for the happiness or misery of his creatures, he won't transfer from one substance to another the consciousness that draws reward or punishment with it. ...

14. The second question, Can it be different persons if the same substance does the thinking throughout? seems to me to arise out of the question of whether the following is possible:

An immaterial being that has been conscious of the events in its past is

wholly stripped of all that consciousness, losing it beyond the power of ever retrieving it again; so that now it (as it were) opens a new account, with a new starting date, having a consciousness that can't reach back beyond this new state.

Really, the question is whether if this happened it could be the same person who had first one consciousness and then another, with no possibility of communication between them. [Locke says that this must be regarded as possible by 'those who hold preexistence', that is, who believe in reincarnation. He attacks them, thereby attacking the separation of 'same person' from 'same consciousness', and proposes a thought experiment:] Reflect on yourself, and conclude that you have in yourself an immaterial spirit that is what thinks in you, keeps you the same throughout the constant change of your body, and is what you call 'myself'. Now try to suppose also that it is the same soul that was in Nestor or Thersites at the siege of Troy. This isn't obviously absurd; for souls, as far as we know anything of their nature, can go with any portion of matter as well as with any other; so the soul or thinking substance that is now yourself may once really have been the soul of someone else, such as Thersites or Nestor. But you don't now have any consciousness of any of the actions either of those two; so can you conceive yourself as being the same person with either of them? Can their actions have anything to do with you? Can you attribute those actions to yourself, or think of them as yours more than the actions of any other men that ever existed? Of course you can't

15. So we can easily conceive of being the same person at the resurrection, though in a body with partly different parts or structure from what one has now, as long as the same consciousness stays with the soul that inhabits the body. But the soul alone, in the change of bodies, would not be accounted enough to make the same man—except by someone who identifies the soul with the man. If the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, were to enter and inform the body of a cobbler who has been deserted by his own soul, everyone sees that he would be the same person as the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions; but who would say it was the same man? The body contributes to making the man, and in this case, I should think everyone would let the body settle the 'same man' question, not dissuaded from this by the soul, with all its princely thoughts. To everyone but himself he would be the same cobbler, the same man. I know that in common parlance 'same person' and 'same man' stand for the same thing; and of course everyone will always be free to speak as he pleases, giving words what meanings he thinks fit, and changing them as often as he likes. Still, when we want to explore what makes the same spirit, man, or person, we must fix the ideas of spirit, man, or person in our minds; and when we have become clear about what we mean by them, we shan't find it hard to settle, for each of them, when it is 'the same' and when not.

16. But although the same immaterial substance or soul does not by itself, in all circumstances, make the same man, it is clear that consciousness unites actions—whether from long ago or from the immediately preceding moment—into the same person. Whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions is the same person to whom they both belong. If my present consciousness that I am now writing were also a consciousness that I saw an overflowing of the Thames last winter and that I saw Noah's ark and the flood, I couldn't doubt that I who write this now am the same self that saw the Thames overflowed last winter and viewed the flood at the general deluge—place that self in what substance you please. I could no more doubt this than I can doubt that I who write this am the same myself now while I write as I was yesterday, whether or not I consist of all the same substance, material or immaterial. For sameness of substance is irrelevant to sameness of self: I am as much involved in—and as justly accountable for— an action that was done a thousand years ago and is appropriated to me now by this self-consciousness as I am for what I did a moment ago.

17. Self is that conscious thinking thing that feels or is conscious of pleasure and pain and capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself as far as that consciousness extends. (This holds true whatever substance the thinking thing is made up of; it doesn't matter whether it is spiritual or material, simple or compounded.) You must find that while your little finger is brought under your consciousness it is as much a part of yourself as is your head or your heart. If the finger were amputated and this consciousness went along with it, deserting the rest of the body, it is evident that the little finger would then be the person, the same person; and this self would then would have nothing to do with the rest of the body. As with spatial separation so also with temporal: something with which the consciousness of this present thinking thing can join itself makes the same person, and is one self with it, as everyone who reflects will perceive.

18. Personal identity is the basis for all the right and justice of reward and punishment. What everyone is concerned for, for himself, is happiness and misery—with no concern for what becomes of any substance that isn't connected with that consciousness. [Locke goes on to apply that to his 'finger' example, supposing that the finger takes the original consciousness with it, and that the rest of the body acquires a new consciousness.]

19. This illustrates my thesis that personal identity consists not in the identity of substance but in the identity of consciousness. If Socrates and the present mayor of Queenborough agree in that, they are the same person; if Socrates awake doesn't partake of the same consciousness as Socrates sleeping, they aren't the same person. And to punish Socrates awake for something done by sleeping Socrates without Socrates awake ever being conscious of it would be as unjust as to punish someone for an action of his

twin brother's merely because their outsides were so alike that they couldn't be distinguished.

20. It may be objected: 'Suppose I wholly lose the memory of some parts of my life beyond any possibility of retrieving them, so that I shall never be conscious of them again; aren't I still the same person who did those actions, had those thoughts that I once was conscious of, even though I have now forgotten them?' To this I answer that we must be careful about what the word 'I' is applied to. This objector is thinking of sameness of the man, and calls it 'I' because he assumes that the same man is the same person. But the assumption isn't necessarily correct. If one man could have distinct disconnected consciousnesses at different times, that same man would certainly make different persons at different times. That this is what people in general think can be seen in the most solemn declaration of their opinions: human laws don't punish the madman for the sane man's actions, or the sane man for what the madman did, because they treat them as two persons. This is reflected in common speech when we say that someone is 'not himself' or is 'beside himself'. Those phrases insinuate that the speaker thinks—or that those who coined the phrases thought—that the self was changed, the self-same person was no longer in that man.

21. 'It is still hard to conceive that Socrates, the same individual man, might be two persons.' To help us with this we must consider what is meant by 'Socrates', or 'the same individual man'. There are three options. The same man might be any of these:

1. the same individual, immaterial, thinking substance; in short, the numerically same soul and nothing else,
2. the same animal, without any regard to an immaterial soul,
3. the same immaterial spirit united to the same animal.

Help yourself! On any of these accounts of 'same man', it is impossible for personal identity to consist in anything but consciousness, or reach any further than that does. According to 1, a man born of different women, and in distant times, might still be the same man. Anyone who allows this must also allow that the same man could be two distinct persons. . . . According to 2 and 3, Socrates in this life cannot be the same man as anyone in the afterlife. The only way to do this—allowing for the possibility that Socrates in Athens and Socrates in Limbo are the same man—is through an appeal to sameness of consciousness; and that amounts to equating human identity—'same man'—with personal identity. But that equation is problematic, because it makes it hard to see how the infant Socrates can be the same man as Socrates after the resurrection. There seems to be little agreement about what makes a man, and thus about what makes the same individual man; but whatever we think about that, if we are not to fall into great

absurdities we must agree that sameness of person resides in consciousness.

22. You may want to object: 'But isn't a man drunk and sober the same person? Why else is he punished for what he does when drunk, even if he is never afterwards conscious of it? He is just as much a single person as a man who walks in his sleep and is answerable, while awake, for any harm he did in his sleep.' Here is my reply to that . Human laws punish both, with a justice suitable to the state of knowledge of those who administer the law: in these cases they can't distinguish for sure what is real from what is counterfeit; and so they don't allow the ignorance in drunkenness or sleep as a plea. Granted: punishment is tied to personhood, which is tied to consciousness, and the drunkard may not be conscious of what he did; but the courts justly punish him, because his bad actions are proved against him, and his lack of consciousness of them can't be proved for him. It may be reasonable to think that on the great day when the secrets of all hearts are laid open, nobody will be held accountable for actions of which he knows nothing; everybody will receive his sentence with his conscience agreeing with God's judgment by accusing or excusing him.

23. Nothing but consciousness can unite remote existences into the same person. The identity of substance won't do it. For whatever substance there is, and whatever it is like, without consciousness there is no person. A substance without consciousness can no more be a person than a carcass can.

[In the remainder of this section, and in section 24. Locke discusses possible cases: two persons who take turns in animating one animal body ('the night man and the day man'); and one person who alternately animates two different animal bodies. The central emphasis throughout is on the uselessness in these questions of the concept of the same immaterial substance.]

25. I agree that on the question of contingent fact the more probable opinion is that this consciousness is tied to, and is a state of, a single immaterial substance. Please yourself about that. However, every thinking being that can experience happiness or misery must grant that there is something, himself, that he is concerned for and wants to be happy; and that this self has existed continuously for a period of time and therefore may exist for months and years to come, with no set limit to its duration, and thus may be the same self, carried by consciousness into the future. It is through this consciousness that he finds himself to be the same self that acted thus and so some years ago and through which he is happy or miserable now. In all these thoughts we place sameness of self in sameness not of substance but of consciousness. Substances might come and go through the duration of such a consciousness; and for as long as a substance is in a vital union with the thing containing this consciousness it is a part of that same self. Thus, any part of my

body, while vitally united to that which is conscious in me, is a part of myself (for example my little finger, while it relates to me in such a way that if it is damaged I feel pain); but when the vital union is broken, what was a part of myself a moment ago is now not so, any more than a part of another man's self is a part of me. [The rest of the section illustrates and repeats this line of thought.]

26. 'Person', I take it, is the name for this self. Wherever you find what you call 'myself, anyone else may say there is 'the same person'. 'Person' is a forensic term [= 'a term designed for use in legal proceedings'], having to do with actions and their merit; and so it applies only to active thinking beings that are capable of a law, and of happiness and misery. It is only through consciousness that this personality [Locke's word] extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, becoming concerned and accountable; the person owns and attributes past actions to itself for the same reason that it does the present. All this is founded in a concern for happiness, which unavoidably accompanies consciousness— something that is conscious of pleasure and pain desires that the self that is conscious should be happy. As for past actions that the self cannot through consciousness square with or join to the present self—it can no more be concerned with them than if they had never been done. To receive pleasure or pain, i.e. reward or punishment, on account of any such action is all of a piece with being born happy or miserable, without any merit or demerit at all. Suppose a man were punished now for what he had done in another life of which he cannot have any consciousness, how does that so-called punishment differ from simply being created miserable?

27. In treating this subject I have considered as perhaps possible some states of affairs— e.g. the one about the prince and the cobbler— that will look strange to some readers, and perhaps are strange. But I think they are permissible, given our ignorance about the nature of the thinking thing in us which we look on as ourselves. If we knew with regard to this thinking thing what it is, or how it is tied to a certain system of fleeting animal spirits [see note in viii.12], or whether or not it can perform its operations of thinking and memory outside of a body organized as ours is, and whether God has decided that every such spirit or thinking thing shall be united to only one such body, with its memory depending on the health of that body's organs, we might see the absurdity of some of the cases I considered. But as we are in the dark about these matters, we ordinarily think of the thinking thing or soul of a man as an immaterial substance, owing nothing to matter and compatible with any kind of matter; and on that basis there cannot from the nature of things be any absurdity in supposing that the same soul might at different times be united to different bodies, making one man with each of them for as long as they were united....

28. To conclude: any substance that begins to exist must during its existence necessarily

be the same; any complex of substances that begins to exist must during the existence of its component parts be the same; any mode that begins to exist is throughout its existence the same. . . . It appears from this that the difficulty or obscurity that people have found in this matter has arisen from the poor use of words rather than from any obscurity in things themselves. For whatever makes the specific idea to which the name is applied, if we steadily keep to that idea it will be easy for us to distinguish same and different, with no doubts arising. I defend this in the next, final section .

29. Suppose we take a man to be a rational spirit, then it is easy to know what is the same man, namely the same spirit—whether or not it is embodied. Suppose our idea of a man is a rational spirit vitally united to a body with a certain structure; then such a rational spirit will be the same man as long as it is united to such a body, though it needn't be the same body throughout. If anyone's idea of a man is that of the vital union of parts in a certain shape [here = 'structure'], as long as that vital union and shape remain in a compound body, remaining the same except for a turnover in its constituent particles, it will be the same man. For the complex idea we use when classifying a thing as being of a certain kind also determines what it is for a thing of that kind to continue in existence.

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Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*.

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Chapter 4: Philosophy of Religion

Is there a spiritual dimension to existence?
Is there the divine? What is the divine's
relationship to the material universe?

One of the opening questions in the chapter on metaphysics asked:

It seems like everything has a cause. How far back does the chain of causation go? Is there an uncaused cause or an infinite regress of causation?

If there is an uncaused cause, what do we call that thing? Is there a word other than “god” that we would use? What if there is an infinite regress? What implications might this have? In philosophy of religion, we want to explore the question of whether the divine exists and if so, if so, what the divine is like, as well as how does the divine relates to us and the Cosmos.

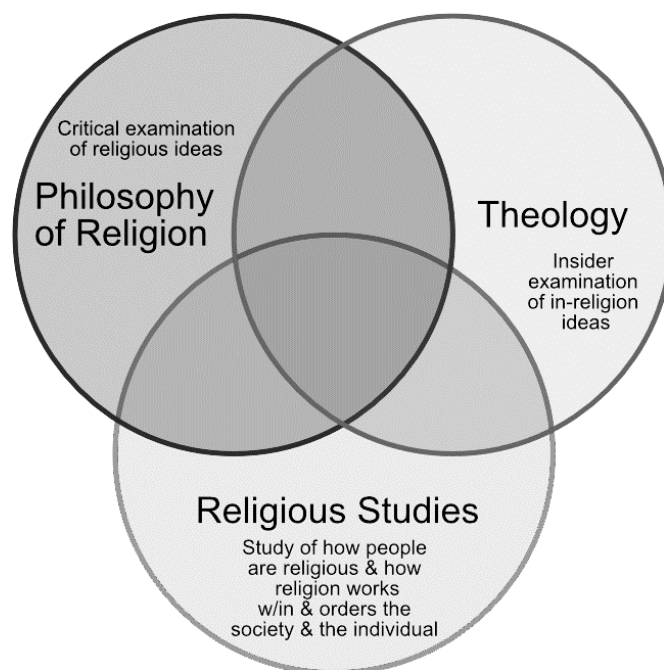


Figure 6: The relationship between Philosophy of Religion, Religious Studies, and Theology.

Philosophy of religion is the critical examination of religious ideas. When we do philosophy of religion, we look to see whether the religious idea coheres with all of our other ideas, whether it is internally consistent, and so on. It is distinct from both religious studies and theology. Religious studies is more interested in how religion functions in people and within communities. Theology is more of an insider sorting of in-religion ideas. These three fields of study can overlap, but they are not the same.

On the Aftermath of Theology – Peter Rollins

From *How (Not) to Speak of God* by Peter Rollins.

There is an old anecdote in which a mystic, an evangelical pastor and a fundamentalist preacher die on the same day and awake to find themselves by the pearly gates. Upon reaching the gates they are promptly greeted by Peter, who informs them that before entering heaven they must be interviewed by Jesus concerning the state of their doctrine. The first to be called forward is the mystic, who is quietly ushered into a room. Five hours later the mystic reappears with a smile, saying, ‘I thought I had got it all wrong.’ Then Peter signals to the evangelical pastor, who stands up and enters the room. After a full day has passed the pastor reappears with a frown and says to himself, ‘How could I have been so foolish!’ Finally Peter asks the fundamentalist to follow him. The fundamentalist picks up his well-worn Bible and walks into the room. A few days pass with no sign of the preacher, then finally the door swings open and Jesus himself appears, exclaiming, ‘How could I have got it all so wrong!’

What is at issue in this anecdote is two different ways of approaching our religious traditions. The first is represented by the Christian mystic who is committed to his tradition yet acknowledges that it falls short of grasping the mind of God. This approach does not deny the existence of a relationship and does not imply that we cannot commit actively to the wisdom of our particular Christian tradition; it simply acknowledges that the relationship we have with God cannot be reduced to our understanding of that relationship. The second way (shown in a weak sense by the evangelical pastor and in a strong sense by the fundamentalist preacher) relates to a type of idolatrous relation in which we believe that our ideas actually represent the way that God and the world really operate. The weak sense, testified to by the pastor, is unintentional and dissipates in the face of divine encounter, while the second, evidenced by the fundamentalist, is Pharisaic in nature, for it refuses to give up its interpretation of God, even in the presence of God. Indeed, this can be seen as one of the central problems with the Pharisees as represented

in the New Testament, for they held so closely to their interpretation of the Messiah that when the Messiah finally appeared in a form that was different to what they expected, they rejected the Messiah in order to retain the integrity of their interpretation.

The difference between the idea that our Christian traditions describe God and the view that they are worshipful responses to God is important to grasp, for while the former seeks to define, the latter is engaged with response. By charting the latter course, those within the emerging conversation perceive a very different way of understanding theology. It is no longer thought of as a human discourse that speaks of God but rather as the place where God speaks into human discourse. In other words, theology is understood as the site in which revelation makes its appearance in the world, the place in which theos (God) impacts, and overwhelms, the human realm of logos (reason). Consequently we do not do theology but are rather overcome and transformed by it: we do not master it but are mastered by it.

If theology comes to be understood as the place where God speaks, then we must seek, not to speak of God, but rather to be that place where God speaks. Through our words and actions we seek to be the site of revelation through which people encounter the life-giving Word of God. For some, this change in the understanding of theology seems to undermine the legitimacy of various Christian traditions, and ultimately that of Christianity itself. However, this is not the case. While our religious traditions may not define God, they can be seen to arise in the aftermath of God, both as a means of provisionally understanding what has occurred in the life of the person or community that has been impacted, and as a response to God. Our 'theological' musings can thus be called a/theological inasmuch as they acknowledge that we must still speak of God (theology, as traditionally understood) while also recognizing that this speech fails to define God (a/theology).

Rather than viewing our traditions as windows through which we can see our beloved, those involved in the emerging conversation acknowledge that our reflections upon God arise as a result of the one who overflows and blinds our understanding. In this way the reflections of our various denominations do not testify directly of God, via their content, but rather testify to God indirectly, via their very existence. The result is not a change in what we think but rather a change in how we think.

God as subject, not object

One way of understanding the relation between God and humanity is through the distinction between knowledge of something as an object and knowledge of something as

a subject. To understand this better we may take the example of prisoners in a concentration camp during the Second World War. In these camps the guards treated their prisoners as mere objects. They possessed a vast amount of data concerning such things as their prisoners' age, previous occupation, family background and siblings. Yet this type of knowledge, however comprehensive, is poverty-stricken when compared to the type of knowledge that the prisoners' loved ones would have possessed. While some of the guards may have held more objective data about an individual than that individual's own family, the family would still possess a knowledge of the individual which the soldiers could never gain, a knowledge that is only opened up in love. For while those who imprison us, employ us or sell products to us may treat us as objects, the ones who love us treat us as subjects, subjects who can never be fully grasped in terms of cold facts and statistical probabilities. Indeed this is the difference between love and lust, for while lust treats the other solely as an object to be devoured, love treats the other as a subject who cannot be reduced wholly to an object.

God can never be and ought never to be reduced to a mere object for consideration, for in faith God is experienced as the ultimate subject. God is not a theoretical problem to somehow resolve but rather a mystery to be participated in. This perspective is evidenced in the Bible itself when we note that the term 'knowing' in the Hebrew tradition (in contrast to the Greek tradition) is about engaging in an intimate encounter rather than describing some objective fact: religious truth is thus that which transforms reality rather than that which describes it.

While descriptions concerning the experience of this ineffable encounter differ, there is a certain family resemblance between some of the most sophisticated and sustained attempts at explanation. These include the feeling of absolute dependence (Schleiermacher), the feeling of utter confidence in the face of anything (Barth and Bultmann), the feeling of ultimate concern (Tillich) and the feeling of being preceded by something other (Rosenzweig).³³ Each of these expressions helps to articulate the sense that one is no longer master over one's own existence – that God is not the object of our thought but rather the absolute subject before whom we are the object. This is confirmed in baptism when we say that we are 'baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost'. Here we do not name God but God's name names us.

God as hyper-present

By offering a robust a/theology which acknowledges the proper place of doubt, ambiguity, complexity and mystery, we acknowledge that God's interaction with the world is irreducible to understanding, precisely because God's presence is a type of Hyper-

presence. Hyper-presence is a term that refers to a type of divine saturation that exists in the heart of God's presence. It means that God not only overflows and overwhelms our understanding but also overflows and overwhelms our experience. While many of the communities taking part in the emerging conversation engage in highly creative forms of religious activity, encouraging a full range of sensual experience in worship, it would be a mistake to think that such openness to other languages (such as those of painting, poetry and ritual) allows privileged access to God that is inaccessible to reason. While helping to reintroduce a wide range of experience to worship, those involved in the emerging conversation testify to the idea that God can no more be contained in experience than in language. While both expressions are important, they each testify to that which cannot be contained in either. Indeed, one of the reasons why many of the communities involved in the emerging conversation engage in creative forms of worship lies, not in the conviction that opening up a wider array of sense experience in worship will lead to a more effective grasping of God, but rather in the fact that, in the aftermath of God, all our being cries out in response.

The acknowledgement that God is hyper-present has inspired Christians throughout history to think up different ways to express God as revealed through Christ. For instance, Paul Tillich spoke of the 'God beyond God'; Jean-Luc Marion writes the word 'God' with a St Andrew's cross through the center; and Meister Eckhart spoke of forsaking God for the sake of God.

The un/known God

What is beginning to arise from the discussion so far is the idea that God ought to be understood as radically transcendent, not because God is somehow distant and remote from us, but precisely because God is immanent. In the same way that the sun blinds the one who looks directly at its light, so God's incoming blinds our intellect. In this way the God who is testified to in the Judeo-Christian tradition saturates our understanding with a blinding presence. This type of transcendent-immanence can be described as 'hypernymity'. While anonymity offers too little information for our understanding to grasp (like a figure on television who has been veiled in darkness so as to protect their identity), hypernymity gives us far too much information. Instead of being limited by the poverty of absence we are short-circuited by the excess of presence. The anonymous and the hypernymous both resist reduction to complete understanding, but for very different reasons.

It is unfortunate that this radical understanding of transcendence has largely been lost in the contemporary Church and is generally thought to be the polar opposite of

immanence. The result of such thinking is the development of a false dichotomy that allows for disagreement between those churches which are accused of maintaining the idea of a distant God and those which are critiqued for celebrating immanence at the expense of God's holiness. Yet in reality the Christian God destroys the idea of immanence and transcendence as opposite points in a diffuse spectrum, replacing this with the idea that immanence and transcendence are one and the same point: God remains transcendent amidst immanence precisely because God remains concealed amidst revelation. In this reading, Christ, as the image of the invisible God, both reveals and conceals God: rendering God known while simultaneously maintaining divine mystery. Here the God testified to in Christianity is affirmed as an un/known God.

Christianity as a/theistic

This recognition of Hyper-presence leads us to reconsider the traditional atheism/theism opposition, for if our beliefs necessarily fall short of that which they attempt to describe, then it would seem that a certain atheistic spirit is actually deeply embedded within Christianity. The term 'atheism' can be understood in a number of ways. For instance, it can refer to the belief that the universe is all there is (existing without source or as its own source), or to the idea that the term 'God' is meaningless, incoherent or irrelevant (although this could more accurately be called 'anti-theism'), or to the disbelief in some particular god or cluster of gods. The latter use of the word has always been acknowledged as part of Christianity; indeed, the early Christians were called atheists because their own affirmation of God involved a rejection of the gods advocated by the Roman Empire. Yet the atheistic spirit within Christianity delves much deeper than this –for we disbelieve not only in other gods but also in the God that we believe in.

As we have seen, we ought to affirm our view of God while at the same time realizing that that view is inadequate. Hence, we act both as theist and atheist. This a/theism is not some agnostic middle point hovering hesitantly between theism and atheism but, rather, actively embraces both out of a profound faith. Just as Christianity does not rest between transcendence and immanence but holds both extremes simultaneously, so too it holds atheism and theism together in the cradle of faith.

This a/theistic approach is deeply deconstructive since it always prevents our ideas from scaling the throne of God. Yet it is important to bear in mind that this deconstruction is not destruction, for the questioning it engages in is not designed to undermine God but to affirm God. This method is similar to that practiced by the original cynics who, far from being nihilists and relativists, were deeply moral individuals who questioned the ethical conduct they saw around them precisely because they loved morality so much. This

a/theism is thus a deeply religious and faith-filled form of cynical discourse, one which captures how faith operates in an oscillation between understanding and unknowing. This unknowing is to be utterly distinguished from an intellectually lazy ignorance, for it is a type of unknowing which arises not from imprecision but rather from deep reflection and sustained meditation.

The a/theistic language employed by those involved in the emerging conversation is not merely a way of shedding some inaccurate ideas we have picked up about God and faith before we can begin the serious task of construction, and it is certainly not a provisional clearing away that must happen before a new religious structure is built: rather it is a recognition that negation is embedded within, and permeates, all religious affirmation. It is an acknowledgement that a desert of ignorance exists in the midst of every oasis of understanding.

This means that the emerging thought is a self-acknowledged form of heresy inasmuch as it is aware of its failure to describe that of which it speaks. This recognition acts as an effective theological response to fundamentalism, as it unsettles the dark heart of its self certain power. Very briefly, fundamentalism can be understood as a particular way of believing one's beliefs rather than referring to the actual content of one's beliefs. It can be described as holding a belief system in such a way that it mutually excludes all other systems, rejecting other views in direct proportion to how much they differ from one's own. In contrast, the a/theistic approach can be seen as a form of disbelieving what one believes, or rather, believing in God while remaining dubious concerning what one believes about God (a distinction that fundamentalism is unable to maintain). This does not actually contradict the idea of orthodoxy but rather allows us to understand it in a new light (which is the subject of the next chapter).

The point is not that our beliefs are inherently problematic but only that they become problematic when held in a manner that would claim more than some provisional, pragmatic response to that which transcends conceptualization. This a/theistic approach is not to be mistaken for some type of synthesis of opposites; rather, it is the uncollapsible tension between affirming our religious ideas while also placing them into question. This a/theism is not then some temporary place of uncertainty on the way to spiritual maturity, but rather is something that operates within faith as a type of heat inducing friction that prevents our liquid images of the divine from cooling and solidifying into idolatrous form.

This approach reflects the writings of such Christian thinkers as Justin Martyr, St Pantaeenus, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who, although affirming the divine presence, wrote insightfully about the danger of reducing God to a reflection of human

rationality and counselled their readers about the need to prostrate the intellect before God. For instance, Gregory of Nyssa speaks of the move towards God as a journey into divine darkness, arguing that while religious knowledge begins as an experience of entering into the light, the deeper we go, the more darkness we find in that light.³⁴ Or as the fifth-century mystic St Leo the Great wrote:

Even if one has progressed far in divine things, one is never nearer the truth than when one understands that those things still remain to be discovered. He who believes he has attained the goal, far from finding what he seeks, falls by the wayside.³⁵

This is a realization borne from a hermeneutic approach that is profoundly sensitive to human finitude.

Augustine also delves into this tradition, encouraging us to bear in mind that God transcends all terms and escapes every conceptualization – even that of being beyond conceptualization.³⁶ Yet one of the most influential thinkers of this tradition was Pseudo-Dionysius, whose *Mystical Theology* is a razor-sharp attack upon speculative thought and stresses the need for liberation from the idolatry of abstraction. Thinking along the same lines as Augustine, though expressing the matter more explicitly, Pseudo-Dionysius articulates an understanding of the divine as beyond the reach of all thinking, whether affirmation or negation:

While he possesses all the positive attributes of the universe (being the universal Cause) yet, in a more strict sense, He does not possess them, since He transcends them all; wherefore there is no contradiction between the affirmations and the negations, inasmuch as He infinitely precedes all conceptions of deprivation, being beyond all positive and negative distinctions.³⁷

Here we witness a way of thinking that seeks to go beyond saying both what God is and what God is not. Union with the divine, on this reading, involves a knowing unknowing in which the individual is radically undone. With this in mind, he writes:

Leave behind the senses and the operations of the intellect, and all things sensible and intellectual, and all things in the world of being and non-being, that thou mayest arise by unknowing towards the union, as far as it is attainable, with him who transcends all being and all knowledge.³⁸

Pseudo-Dionysius argues that this knowing unknowing acknowledges its profound finitude and inability to grasp that to which the religious individual intends. This divine darkness represents a type of supra-darkness that stands in sharp contradistinction to the sub-darkness of a desolate nihilism. While one is brought about by an absolute excess of light, the other results from a total absence; while one represents a higher form of unknowing that subverts reasoning, the other signals mere ignorance.

Indeed, Anselm, who is often seen as a key thinker in claiming that God is conceivable, writes that when gazing upon the Lord, the eye is darkened, noting that:

Surely it is both darkened in itself and dazzled by you. Indeed it is both obscured by its own littleness and overwhelmed by your vastness.³⁹

Indeed, in chapter 15 of the Proslogion we find the following (non)definition of God:

Therefore, Lord, you are not merely that than which a greater cannot be thought; you are something greater than can be thought. For since it is possible to think that such a being exists, then if you are not that being, it is possible to think something greater than you. But that is impossible.⁴⁰

This hypernymity is reflected in the thought of Simeon the New Theologian when he encourages his readers to:

Think of a man standing at night inside his house, with all the doors closed; and then suppose that he opens a window just at the moment when there is a sudden flash of lightning. Unable to bear its brightness, at once he protects himself by closing his eyes and drawing back from the window. So it is with the soul that is enclosed in the realm of the senses; if ever she peeps out through the window of the intellect, she is overwhelmed by the brightness, the lightning, of the pledge of the Holy Spirit that is within her. Unable to bear the splendor of the unveiled light, at once she is bewildered in her intellect, and draws back entirely upon herself, taking refuge, as in a house, among sensory and human beings.⁴¹

By recognizing the limits of human finitude Anselm formulates a definition of God that respects the transcendence of God. Hence his repeated reference to the Bible verse that declares, 'God dwells in inaccessible light'.⁴² This reading of Anselm has been largely overlooked because his claim that God is 'something than which nothing greater can be thought'⁴³ is interpreted as a definition of God rather than a (non)definition. Indeed, it

has the form of a definition but actually ascribes no positive essence to the divine: it does not say that God is the greatest conceivable being but rather that a greater than God cannot be thought. We can indeed conceive of something beyond thought but we cannot think of something beyond that.

For Anselm, the concept 'God' must include the idea of how the object of the concept transcends every concept. As the contemporary philosopher Jean-Luc Marion writes, 'The root of the argument is not reliance on the concept but reliance on a non-concept, acknowledged as such.'⁴⁴ This was something hinted at by the nineteenth-century Russian 'hole worshippers' who drilled holes in their walls and then prayed to them. Here the void that is prayed to replaces any divine object with empty space.⁴⁵

For Anselm there are three levels of existence. The first, and lowest, level is that which exists only in the mind (for instance, a unicorn). The second refers to those things that exist both in the mind and in reality (such as a horse). The third level is that which exists in reality but which cannot be contained in the mind (i.e. God). It is this third level of existence that has often been overlooked by the Church, and yet it is here that we find God.

By exploring the idea that God cannot be reduced to our understanding or experience, we can already draw out two insights regarding the a/theological approach. First, this a/theology views our denominations as arising as a response to God; and second, it acknowledges that these denominations do not make objective claims concerning God. In short, it sees our various denominations as different ways of speaking about our beloved in a manner which maintains epistemological silence.⁴⁶ We must speak and yet we must maintain our silence, we must maintain distance amidst the proximity of God, and we must worship while being careful not to make God into the object of our worship: for God is the subject before whom we worship. This site of uncertainty and unknowing is often a frightening place to dwell, but while the comfort provided by religion is placed into a certain distress by the idea of doubt, this distress, too, is not without a certain comfort. For while we do not grasp God, faith is born amidst the feeling that God grasps us.

Notes

33. See Paul Ricoeur, 'Experience and Language in Religious Discourse', in Dominique Janicaud et al, eds., *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2000), pp. 127–8.

34. See Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Everett Ferguson and Abraham Malherbe (New York, Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 94–5.

35. Quoted in Richard Woods, *Mysticism and Prophecy* (London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), p. 53.
36. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. R. P. H. Green (London, Clarendon Press, 1996).
37. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*, trans. Editors of The Shrine of Wisdom (Surrey, The Shrine of Wisdom, 1965), p. 10.
38. Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies*, p. 9.
39. St Anselm, *Monologion and Proslogion*, trans. Thomas Williams (Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), p. 109.
40. St Anselm, *Monologion and Proslogion*, p. 109.
41. Quoted in Daniel Clendenn, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* (Michigan, Baker, 1997), p. 57.
42. 1 Timothy 6.16.
43. St Anselm, *Monologion and Proslogion*, p. 99.
44. Jean-Luc Marion, 'Is the Ontological Argument Ontological?' in Ilse N. Bulhof and Laurens ten Kate, eds., *Flight of the Gods* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 87.
45. See James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* (London, Routledge, 2004), p. 107.
46. The word 'epistemology' refers to the area of philosophical discourse which explores the area of knowledge acquisition.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Peter Rollins, "The Aftermath of Theology," in *How (Not) to Speak of God* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2006).

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On Gravity and Grace – Weil

From *Gravity and Grace* by Simone Weil

All the *natural* movements of the soul are controlled by laws analogous to those of

physical gravity. Grace is the only exception.²²

We must always expect things to happen in conformity with the laws of gravity unless there is supernatural intervention.

Two forces rule the universe: light and gravity.

Gravity. Generally what we expect of others depends on the effect of gravity upon ourselves, what we receive from them depends on the effect of gravity upon them. Sometimes (by chance) the two coincide, often they do not.

What is the reason that as soon as one human being shows he needs another (no matter whether his need be slight or great) the latter draws back from him? Gravity.

Lear, a tragedy of gravity. Everything we call base is a phenomenon due to gravity. Moreover the word baseness is an indication of this fact.

The object of an action and the level of the energy by which it is carried out are distinct from each other. A certain thing *must* be done. But where is the energy to be drawn for its accomplishment? A virtuous action can lower a man if there is not enough energy available on the same level.

What is base and what is superficial are on the same level. 'His love is violent but base': a possible sentence. 'His love is deep but base': an impossible one.

If it be true that the same suffering is much harder to bear for a high motive than for a base one (the people who stood, motionless, from one to eight o'clock in the morning for the sake of having an egg, would have found it very difficult to do so in order to save a human life), a base form of virtue is perhaps in some respects better able to stand the test of difficulties, temptations and misfortunes than a noble one. Napoleon's soldiers. Hence the use of cruelty in order to sustain or raise the morale of soldiers. Something not to be forgotten in connection with moral weakness.

This is a particular example of the law which generally puts force on the side of baseness. Gravity is, as it were, a symbol of it.

²² Weil here is claiming that our actions, thoughts, et cetera are governed by laws analogous to the natural laws, here symbolized as "gravity". All physical things must obey the laws of gravity. So too do our souls follow a law of gravity of sorts. We are harmed, we seek to harm in kind. We are loved, we love in kind. Apart from what she calls grace, there is a law of cause and effect (gravity) that governs our behaviors and thoughts.

Queueing for food. The same action is easier if the motive is base than if it is noble. Base motives have in them more energy than noble ones. Problem: in what way can the energy belonging to the base motives be transferred to the noble ones?

I must not forget that at certain times when my headaches were raging I had an intense longing to make another human being suffer by hitting him in exactly the same part of his forehead.

Analogous desires—very frequent in human beings.

When in this state, I have several times succumbed to the temptation at least to say words which cause pain. Obedience to the force of gravity. The greatest sin. Thus we corrupt the function of language, which is to express the relationship between things.

Attitude of supplication: I must necessarily turn to something other than myself since it is a question of being delivered from self.

Any attempt to gain this deliverance by means of my own energy would be like the efforts of a cow which pulls at its hobble and so falls onto its knees.

In making it one liberates a certain amount of energy in oneself by a violence which serves to degrade more energy. Compensation as in thermodynamics; a vicious circle from which one can be delivered only from on high.

The source of man's moral energy is outside him, like that of his physical energy (food, air etc.). He generally finds it, and that is why he has the illusion—as on the physical plane—that his being carries the principle of its preservation within itself. Privation alone makes him feel his need. And, in the event of privation, he cannot help turning to *anything whatever* which is edible.

There is only one remedy for that: a chlorophyll conferring the faculty of feeding on light.

Not to judge. All faults are the same. There is only one fault: incapacity to feed upon light, for where capacity to do this has been lost all faults are possible.

'My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.'

There is no good apart from this capacity.

To come down by a movement in which gravity plays no part. ... Gravity makes things come down, wings make them rise: what wings raised to the second power can make

things come down without weight?

Creation is composed of the descending movement of gravity, the ascending movement of grace and the descending movement of the second degree of grace.

Grace is the law of the descending movement.

To lower oneself is to rise in the domain of moral gravity.

Moral gravity makes us fall towards the heights.

Too great affliction places a human being beneath pity: it arouses disgust, horror and scorn.

Pity goes down to a certain level but not below it. What does charity do in order to descend lower?

Have those who have fallen so low pity on themselves?

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Simone Weil, "Gravity and Grace," in *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Marion Von Der Ruhr (London and New York: Routledge, 1952).

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On the Intersubjectivity of Persons and the Divine – Martin Buber

From *I and Thou* by Martin Buber.

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak.

The basic words are not single words but word pairs.

One basic word is the word pair *I-You*.

The other basic word is the word pair *I-It*; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It.

Thus the I of man is also twofold.

For the I of the basic word *I-You* is different from that in the basic word *I-It*.

Basic words do not state something that might exist outside them; by being spoken they establish a mode of existence.

Basic words are spoken with one's being.

When one says You, the I of the word pair *I-You* is said, too.

When one says It, the I of the word pair *I-It* is said, too.

The basic word *I-You* can only be spoken with one's whole being.

The basic word *I-It* can never be spoken with one's whole being

There is no I as such but only the I of the basic word *I-You* and the I of the basic word *I-It*.

When a [person] says I, he means one or the other. The I he means is present when he says I. And when he says You or It, the I of one or the other basic word is also present.

Being I and saying I are the same. Saying I and saying one of the two basic words are the same.

Whoever speaks one of the basic words enters into the word and stands in it.

[...]

Whoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others. But where You is said there is no something. You has no borders. Whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation.

[...]

When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word *I-You* to him, then

he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things. He is no longer He or She, limited by other Hes or Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, nor a condition that can be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. Neighbor-less and seamless, he is You and fills the firmament. Not as if there were nothing but he; but everything else lives in *his* light.

Even as a melody is not composed of tones, nor a verse of words, nor a statue of lines—one must pull and tear to turn a unity into a multiplicity—so it is with the human being to whom I say You. I can abstract from him the color of his hair or the color of his speech or the color of his graciousness; I have to do this again and again; but immediately he is no longer *You*. [...] I do not find the human being to whom I say You in any Sometime and Somewhere. I can place him there and have to do this again and again, but immediately he becomes a He or a She, an It, and no longer remains my You.

[...]

The You encounters me by grace—it cannot be found by seeking. But that I speak the basic word to it is a deed of my whole being, is my essential deed.

The You encounters me. But I enter into a direct relationship to it. Thus the relationship is election and electing, passive and active at *once*;. An action of the whole being must approach passivity, for it does away with all partial actions and thus with any sense of action, which always depends on limited exertions.

The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one's whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You.

All actual life is encounter

Extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal You. Every single You is a glimpse of that. Through every single You the basic word addresses the Eternal You. The mediatorship of the You of all beings accounts for the fullness of our relationships to them—and for the lack of fulfillment. The innate You is actualized each time without ever being perfected. It attains perfection solely in the immediate relationship to the You that in accordance with its nature cannot become an It.

Men have addressed their eternal You by many names. When they sang of what they had thus named, they still meant You: the first myths were hymns of praise. Then the names entered into the It-language; men felt impelled more and more to think of and to talk about their eternal You as an It. But all names of God remain hallowed—because they have been used not only to speak *of* God but also to speak

to him.

Some would deny any legitimate use of the word God because it has been misused so much. Certainly it is the most burdened of all human words. Precisely for that reason it is the most imperishable and unavoidable. And how much weight has all erroneous talk about God's nature and works (although there never has been nor can be any such talk that is not erroneous) compared with the one truth that all men who have addressed God really meant him? For whoever pronounces the word God and really means You, addresses, no matter what his delusion, the true You of his life that cannot be restricted by any other and to whom he stands in a relationship that includes all others

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1937), https://archive.org/details/IAndThou_572.

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On the Ontological Proof of God's Existence – Anslem

From the *Prosologion* by Anslem

Chapter II

Truly there is a God, although the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

And so, Lord, do thou, who dost give understanding to faith, give me, so far as thou knowest it to be profitable, to understand that thou art as we believe; and that thou art that which we believe. And indeed, we believe that thou art a being than which nothing greater can be conceived. Or is there no such nature, since the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God? (Psalms xiv. 1). But, at any rate, this very fool, when he hears of this being of which I speak – a being than which nothing greater can be conceived – understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding; although he does not understand it to exist

For, it is one thing for an object to be in the understanding, and another to understand that the object exists. When a painter first conceives of what he will afterwards perform, he has it in his understanding, but he does not yet understand it to be, because he has not yet performed it. But after he has made the painting, he both has it in his understanding, and he understands that it exists, because he has made it.

Hence, even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understanding. And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.

Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality.

Chapter III

God cannot be conceived not to exist. –God is that, than which nothing greater can be conceived. –That which can be conceived not to exist is not God.

And it assuredly exists so truly, that it cannot be conceived not to exist. For, it is possible to conceive of a being which cannot be conceived not to exist; and this is greater than one which can be conceived not to exist. Hence, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, can be conceived not to exist, it is not that, than which nothing greater can be conceived. But this is an irreconcilable contradiction. There is, then, so truly a being than which nothing greater can be conceived to exist, that it cannot even be conceived not to exist; and this being thou art, O Lord, our God.

So truly, therefore, dost thou exist, O Lord, my God, that thou canst not be conceived not to exist; and rightly. For, if a mind could conceive of a being better than thee, the creature would rise above the Creator; and this is most absurd. And, indeed, whatever else there is, except thee alone, can be conceived not to exist. To thee alone, therefore, it belongs to exist more truly than all other beings, and hence in a higher degree than all others. For, whatever else exists does not exist so truly, and hence in a less degree it belongs to it to exist. Why, then, has the fool said in his heart, there is no God (Psalms xiv. 1), since it is so evident, to a rational mind, that thou dost exist in the highest degree of all? Why,

except that he is dull and a fool?

Chapter IV

How the fool has said in his heart what cannot be conceived. –A thing may be conceived in two ways: (1) when the word signifying it is conceived; (2) when the thing itself is understood. As far as the word goes, God can be conceived not to exist; in reality he cannot.

But how has the fool said in his heart what he could not conceive; or how is it that he could not conceive what he said in his heart? Since it is the same to say in the heart, and to conceive.

But, if really, nay, since really, he both conceived, because he said in his heart; and did not say in his heart, because he could not conceive; there is more than one way in which a thing is said in the heart or conceived. For, in one sense, an object is conceived, when the word signifying it is conceived; and in another, when the very entity, which the object is, is understood.

In the former sense, then, God can be conceived not to exist; but in the latter, not at all. For no one who understands what fire and water are can conceive fire to be water, in accordance with the nature of the facts themselves, although this is possible according to the words. So, then, no one who understands what God is can conceive that God does not exist; although he says these words in his heart, either without any or with some foreign, signification. For, God is that than which a greater cannot be conceived. And he who thoroughly understands this, assuredly understands that this being so truly exists, that not even in concept can it be nonexistent. Therefore, he who understands that God so exists, cannot conceive that he does not exist.

I thank thee, gracious Lord, I thank thee; because what I formerly believed by your bounty, I now so understand by thine illumination, that if I were unwilling to believe that thou dost exist, I should not be able not to understand this to be true.

Chapter V

God is whatever it is better to be than not to be; and he, as the only self-existent being, creates all things from nothing.

What art thou, then, Lord God, than whom nothing greater can be conceived? But what art thou, except that which, as the highest of all beings, alone exists through itself, and

creates all other things from nothing? For, whatever is not this is less than a thing which can be conceived of. But this cannot be conceived of thee. What good, therefore, does the supreme Good lack, through which every good is? Therefore, thou art just, truthful, blessed, and whatever it is better to be than not to be. For it is better to be just than not just; better to be blessed than not blessed.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Anselm, *Proslogium; Monologium: An Appendix In Behalf Of The Fool By Gaunilo; And Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1903), <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/anselm-proslogium.asp>.

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On the Five Ways to Prove God's Existence – Thomas Aquinas

From the *Summa Theologiae* by Thomas Aquinas

I answer that, the existence of God can be proved in five ways.

The first and more manifest way is the argument from motion. It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another, for nothing can be in motion except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is in motion; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e. that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is in motion must be put in motion by another. If that by which

it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be no first mover, and, consequently, no other mover; seeing that subsequent movers move only inasmuch as they are put in motion by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is put in motion by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.

The second way is from the nature of the efficient cause. In the world of sense we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or only one. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to corrupt, and consequently, they are possible to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which is possible not to be at some time is not. Therefore, if everything is possible not to be, then at one time there could have been nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist; and thus even now nothing would be in existence—which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes.

Therefore we cannot but postulate the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.

The fourth way is taken from the gradation to be found in things. Among beings there are

some more and some less good, true, noble and the like. But “more” and “less” are predicated of different things, according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest and, consequently, something which is uttermost being; for those things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in Metaph. ii. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus; as fire, which is the maximum heat, is the cause of all hot things. Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.

The fifth way is taken from the governance of the world. We see that things which lack intelligence, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that not fortuitously, but designedly, do they achieve their end. Now whatever lacks intelligence cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is shot to its mark by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benziger Bros, 1947), <https://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/>.

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On the Irrationality of Believing in Miracles – David Hume

From Section 10 from *Miracles* by David Hume

Part I.

86. There is, in Dr. Tillotson’s writings, an argument against the real presence, which is as

concise, and elegant, and strong as any argument can possibly be supposed against a doctrine, so little worthy of a serious refutation. It is acknowledged on all hands, says that learned prelate, that the authority, either of the scripture or of tradition, is founded merely in the testimony of the apostles, who were eyewitnesses to those miracles of our Savior, by which he proved his divine mission. Our evidence, then, for the truth of the Christian religion is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses; because, even in the first authors of our religion, it was no greater; and it is evident it must diminish in passing from them to their disciples; nor can any one rest such confidence in their testimony, as in the immediate object of his senses. But a weaker evidence can never destroy a stronger; and therefore, were the doctrine of the real presence ever so clearly revealed in scripture, it were directly contrary to the rules of just reasoning to give our assent to it. It contradicts sense, though both the scripture and tradition, on which it is supposed to be built, carry not such evidence with them as sense; when they are considered merely as external evidences, and are not brought home to every one's breast, by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing is so convenient as a decisive argument of this kind, which must at least silence the most arrogant bigotry and superstition, and free us from their impertinent solicitations. I flatter myself, that I have discovered an argument of a like nature, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures. For so long, I presume, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies be found in all history, sacred and profane.

87. Though experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; it must be acknowledged, that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into errors. One, who in our climate, should expect better weather in any week of June than in one of December, would reason justly, and conformably to experience; but it is certain, that he may happen, in the event, to find himself mistaken. However, we may observe, that, in such a case, he would have no cause to complain of experience; because it commonly informs us beforehand of the uncertainty, by that contrariety of events, which we may learn from a diligent observation. All effects follow not with like certainty from their supposed causes. Some events are found, in all countries and all ages, to have been constantly conjoined together: Others are found to have been more variable, and sometimes to disappoint our expectations; so that, in our reasonings concerning matter of fact, there are all imaginable degrees of assurance, from the highest certainty to the lowest species of moral evidence.

A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are

founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation; and when at last he fixes his judgement, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability. All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority. A hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a doubtful expectation of any event; though a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory, reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance. In all cases, we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence.

88. To apply these principles to a particular instance; we may observe that there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eyewitnesses and spectators. This species of reasoning, perhaps, one may deny to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. I shall not dispute about a word. It will be sufficient to observe that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. It being a general maxim, that no objects have any discoverable connection together, and that all the inferences, which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction; it is evident that we ought not to make an exception to this maxim in favor of human testimony, whose connection with any event seems, in itself, as little necessary as any other. Were not the memory tenacious to a certain degree; had not men commonly an inclination to truth and a principle of probity; were they not sensible to shame, when detected in a falsehood: Were not these, I say, discovered by experience to be qualities, inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony. A man delirious, or noted for falsehood and villainy, has no manner of authority with us.

And as the evidence, derived from witnesses and human testimony, is founded on past experience, so it varies with the experience, and is regarded either as a proof or a probability, according as the conjunction between any particular kind of report and any kind of object has been found to be constant or variable. There are a number of circumstances to be taken into consideration in all judgements of this kind; and the

ultimate standard, by which we determine all disputes, that may arise concerning them, is always derived from experience and observation. Where this experience is not entirely uniform on any side, it is attended with an unavoidable contrariety in our judgements, and with the same opposition and mutual destruction of argument as in every other kind of evidence. We frequently hesitate concerning the reports of others. We balance the opposite circumstances, which cause any doubt or uncertainty; and when we discover a superiority on any side, we incline to it; but still with a diminution of assurance, in proportion to the force of its antagonist.

89. This contrariety of evidence, in the present case, may be derived from several different causes; from the opposition of contrary testimony; from the character or number of the witnesses; from the manner of their delivering their testimony; or from the union of all these circumstances. We entertain a suspicion concerning any matter of fact, when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are but few, or of a doubtful character; when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony with hesitation, or on the contrary, with too violent asseverations. There are many other particulars of the same kind, which may diminish or destroy the force of any argument, derived from human testimony.

Suppose, for instance, that the fact, which the testimony endeavors to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvelous; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual. The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any connection, which we perceive a priori, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them. But when the fact attested is such a one as has seldom fallen under our observation, here is a contest of two opposite experiences; of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate on the mind by the force, which remains. The very same principle of experience, which gives us a certain degree of assurance in the testimony of witnesses, gives us also, in this case, another degree of assurance against the fact, which they endeavor to establish; from which contradiction there necessarily arises a counterpoise, and mutual destruction of belief and authority.

I should not believe such a story were it told me by Cato, was a proverbial saying in Rome, even during the lifetime of that philosophical patriot.[1] The incredibility of a fact, it was allowed, might invalidate so great an authority.

The Indian prince, who refused to believe the first relations concerning the effects of frost, reasoned justly; and it naturally required very strong testimony to engage his assent to facts, that arose from a state of nature, with which he was unacquainted, and which

bore so little analogy to those events, of which he had had constant and uniform experience. Though they were not contrary to his experience, they were not conformable to it.[2]

90. But in order to increase the probability against the testimony of witnesses, let us suppose, that the fact, which they affirm, instead of being only marvelous, is really miraculous; and suppose also, that the testimony considered apart and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case, there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist.

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.[3]

91. The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), "That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavors to establish; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior." When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion.

Part II.

92. In the foregoing reasoning we have supposed that the testimony, upon which a miracle is founded, may possibly amount to an entire proof, and that the falsehood of that testimony would be a real prodigy: But it is easy to shew that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concession, and that there never was a miraculous event established on so full an evidence.

For first, there is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time, attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable: All which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men.

93. Secondly. We may observe in human nature a principle which, if strictly examined, will be found to diminish extremely the assurance, which we might, from human testimony, have, in any kind of prodigy. The maxim, by which we commonly conduct ourselves in our reasonings, is, that the objects, of which we have no experience, resemble those, of which we have; that what we have found to be most usual is always most probable; and that where there is an opposition of arguments, we ought to give the preference to such as are founded on the greatest number of past observations. But though, in proceeding by this rule, we readily reject any fact which is unusual and incredible in an ordinary degree; yet in advancing farther, the mind observes not always the same rule; but when anything is affirmed utterly absurd and miraculous, it rather the more readily admits of such a fact, upon account of that very circumstance, which ought to destroy all its authority. The passion of surprise and wonder, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion, gives a sensible tendency towards the belief of those events, from which it is derived. And this goes so far, that even those who cannot enjoy this pleasure immediately, nor can believe those miraculous events, of which they are informed, yet love to partake of the satisfaction at secondhand or by rebound, and place a pride and delight in exciting the admiration of others.

With what greediness are the miraculous accounts of travelers received, their descriptions of sea and land monsters, their relations of wonderful adventures, strange men, and uncouth manners? But if the spirit of religion join itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony, in these circumstances, loses all

pretensions to authority. A religionist may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality: he may know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause: or even where this delusion has not place, vanity, excited by so strong a temptation, operates on him more powerfully than on the rest of mankind in any other circumstances; and self-interest with equal force. His auditors may not have, and commonly have not, sufficient judgement to canvass his evidence: what judgement they have, they renounce by principle, in these sublime and mysterious subjects: or if they were ever so willing to employ it, passion and a heated imagination disturb the regularity of its operations. Their credulity increases his impudence: and his impudence overpowers their credulity.

Eloquence, when at its highest pitch, leaves little room for reason or reflection; but addressing itself entirely to the fancy or the affections, captivates the willing hearers, and subdues their understanding. Happily, this pitch it seldom attains. But what a Tully or a Demosthenes could scarcely effect over a Roman or Athenian audience, every Capuchin, every itinerant or stationary teacher can perform over the generality of mankind, and in a higher degree, by touching such gross and vulgar passions.

The many instances of forged miracles, and prophecies, and supernatural events, which, in all ages, have either been detected by contrary evidence, or which detect themselves by their absurdity, prove sufficiently the strong propensity of mankind to the extraordinary and the marvelous, and ought reasonably to beget a suspicion against all relations of this kind. This is our natural way of thinking, even with regard to the most common and most credible events. For instance: There is no kind of report which rises so easily, and spreads so quickly, especially in country places and provincial towns, as those concerning marriages; insomuch that two young persons of equal condition never see each other twice, but the whole neighborhood immediately join them together. The pleasure of telling a piece of news so interesting, of propagating it, and of being the first reporters of it, spreads the intelligence. And this is so well known, that no man of sense gives attention to these reports, till he find them confirmed by some greater evidence. Do not the same passions, and others still stronger, incline the generality of mankind to believe and report, with the greatest vehemence and assurance, all religious miracles?

94. Thirdly. It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people has ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors, who transmitted them with that inviolable sanction and authority, which always attend received opinions. When we peruse the first histories of all nations, we are apt to imagine ourselves

transported into some new world; where the whole frame of nature is disjointed, and every element performs its operations in a different manner, from what it does at present. Battles, revolutions, pestilence, famine and death, are never the effect of those natural causes, which we experience. Prodigies, omens, oracles, judgements, quite obscure the few natural events, that are intermingled with them. But as the former grow thinner every page, in proportion as we advance nearer the enlightened ages, we soon learn, that there is nothing mysterious or supernatural in the case, but that all proceeds from the usual propensity of mankind towards the marvelous, and that, though this inclination may at intervals receive a check from sense and learning, it can never be thoroughly extirpated from human nature.

It is strange, a judicious reader is apt to say, upon the perusal of these wonderful historians, that such prodigious events never happen in our days. But it is nothing strange, I hope, that men should lie in all ages. You must surely have seen instances enough of that frailty. You have yourself heard many such marvelous relations started, which, being treated with scorn by all the wise and judicious, have at last been abandoned even by the vulgar. Be assured, that those renowned lies, which have spread and flourished to such a monstrous height, arose from like beginnings; but being sown in a more proper soil, shot up at last into prodigies almost equal to those which they relate.

It was a wise policy in that false prophet, Alexander, who though now forgotten, was once so famous, to lay the first scene of his impostures in Paphlagonia, where, as Lucian tells us, the people were extremely ignorant and stupid, and ready to swallow even the grossest delusion. People at a distance, who are weak enough to think the matter at all worth enquiry, have no opportunity of receiving better information. The stories come magnified to them by a hundred circumstances. Fools are industrious in propagating the imposture; while the wise and learned are contented, in general, to deride its absurdity, without informing themselves of the particular facts, by which it may be distinctly refuted. And thus the impostor above mentioned was enabled to proceed, from his ignorant Paphlagonians, to the enlisting of votaries, even among the Grecian philosophers, and men of the most eminent rank and distinction in Rome: nay, could engage the attention of that sage emperor Marcus Aurelius; so far as to make him trust the success of a military expedition to his delusive prophecies.

The advantages are so great, of starting an imposture among an ignorant people, that, even though the delusion should be too gross to impose on the generality of them (which, though seldom, is sometimes the case) it has a much better chance for succeeding in remote countries, than if the first scene had been laid in a city renowned for arts and knowledge. The most ignorant and barbarous of these barbarians carry the report abroad.

None of their countrymen have a large correspondence, or sufficient credit and authority to contradict and beat down the delusion. Men's inclination to the marvelous has full opportunity to display itself. And thus a story, which is universally exploded in the place where it was first started, shall pass for certain at a thousand miles distance. But had Alexander fixed his residence at Athens, the philosophers of that renowned mart of learning had immediately spread, throughout the whole Roman empire, their sense of the matter; which, being supported by so great authority, and displayed by all the force of reason and eloquence, had entirely opened the eyes of mankind. It is true; Lucian, passing by chance through Paphlagonia, had an opportunity of performing this good office. But, though much to be wished, it does not always happen, that every Alexander meets with a Lucian, ready to expose and detect his impostures.

95. I may add as a fourth reason, which diminishes the authority of prodigies, that there is no testimony for any, even those which have not been expressly detected, that is not opposed by an infinite number of witnesses; so that not only the miracle destroys the credit of testimony, but the testimony destroys itself. To make this the better understood, let us consider, that, in matters of religion, whatever is different is contrary; and that it is impossible the religions of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, and of China should, all of them, be established on any solid foundation. Every miracle, therefore, pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions (and all of them abound in miracles), as its direct scope is to establish the particular system to which it is attributed; so has it the same force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every other system. In destroying a rival system, it likewise destroys the credit of those miracles, on which that system was established; so that all the prodigies of different religions are to be regarded as contrary facts, and the evidences of these prodigies, whether weak or strong, as opposite to each other. According to this method of reasoning, when we believe any miracle of Mahomet or his successors, we have for our warrant the testimony of a few barbarous Arabians: And on the other hand, we are to regard the authority of Titus Livius, Plutarch, Tacitus, and, in short, of all the authors and witnesses, Grecian, Chinese, and Roman Catholic, who have related any miracle in their particular religion; I say, we are to regard their testimony in the same light as if they had mentioned that Mahometan miracle, and had in express terms contradicted it, with the same certainty as they have for the miracle they relate. This argument may appear over subtle and refined; but is not in reality different from the reasoning of a judge, who supposes that the credit of two witnesses, maintaining a crime against any one, is destroyed by the testimony of two others, who affirm him to have been two hundred leagues distant, at the same instant when the crime is said to have been committed.

96. One of the best attested miracles in all profane history, is that which Tacitus reports

of Vespasian, who cured a blind man in Alexandria, by means of his spittle, and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot; in obedience to a vision of the god Serapis, who had enjoined them to have recourse to the Emperor, for these miraculous cures. The story may be seen in that fine historian;[4] where every circumstance seems to add weight to the testimony, and might be displayed at large with all the force of argument and eloquence, if any one were now concerned to enforce the evidence of that exploded and idolatrous superstition. The gravity, solidity, age, and probity of so great an emperor, who, through the whole course of his life, conversed in a familiar manner with his friends and courtiers, and never affected those extraordinary airs of divinity assumed by Alexander and Demetrius. The historian, a contemporary writer, noted for candor and veracity, and withal, the greatest and most penetrating genius, perhaps, of all antiquity; and so free from any tendency to credulity, that he even lies under the contrary imputation, of atheism and profaneness: The persons, from whose authority he related the miracle, of established character for judgement and veracity, as we may well presume; eyewitnesses of the fact, and confirming their testimony, after the Flavian family was despoiled of the empire, and could no longer give any reward, as the price of a lie. *Utrumque, qui interfuere, nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium.* To which if we add the public nature of the facts, as related, it will appear, that no evidence can well be supposed stronger for so gross and so palpable a falsehood.

There is also a memorable story related by Cardinal de Retz, which may well deserve our consideration. When that intriguing politician fled into Spain, to avoid the persecution of his enemies, he passed through Saragossa, the capital of Aragon, where he was shewn, in the cathedral, a man, who had served seven years as a doorkeeper, and was well known to everybody in town, that had ever paid his devotions at that church. He had been seen, for so long a time, wanting a leg; but recovered that limb by the rubbing of holy oil upon the stump; and the cardinal assures us that he saw him with two legs. This miracle was vouched by all the canons of the church; and the whole company in town were appealed to for a confirmation of the fact; whom the cardinal found, by their zealous devotion, to be thorough believers of the miracle. Here the relater was also contemporary to the supposed prodigy, of an incredulous and libertine character, as well as of great genius; the miracle of so singular a nature as could scarcely admit of a counterfeit, and the witnesses very numerous, and all of them, in a manner, spectators of the fact, to which they gave their testimony. And what adds mightily to the force of the evidence, and may double our surprise on this occasion, is, that the cardinal himself, who relates the story, seems not to give any credit to it, and consequently cannot be suspected of any concurrence in the holy fraud. He considered justly, that it was not requisite, in order to reject a fact of this nature, to be able accurately to disprove the testimony, and to trace its falsehood, through all the circumstances of knavery and credulity which produced it. He knew, that,

as this was commonly altogether impossible at any small distance of time and place; so was it extremely difficult, even where one was immediately present, by reason of the bigotry, ignorance, cunning, and roguery of a great part of mankind. He therefore concluded, like a just reasoner, that such an evidence carried falsehood upon the very face of it, and that a miracle, supported by any human testimony, was more properly a subject of derision than of argument.

There surely never was a greater number of miracles ascribed to one person, than those, which were lately said to have been wrought in France upon the tomb of Abbe Paris, the famous Jansenist, with whose sanctity the people were so long deluded. The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, were everywhere talked of as the usual effects of that holy sepulcher. But what is more extraordinary; many of the miracles were immediately proved upon the spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity, attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that is now in the world. Nor is this all: a relation of them was published and dispersed everywhere; nor were the Jesuits, though a learned body, supported by the civil magistrate, and determined enemies to those opinions, in whose favor the miracles were said to have been wrought, ever able distinctly to refute or detect them. Where shall we find such a number of circumstances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact? And what have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events, which they relate? And this surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation.

97. Is the consequence just, because some human testimony has the utmost force and authority in some cases, when it relates the battle of Philippi or Pharsalia for instance; that therefore all kinds of testimony must, in all cases, have equal force and authority? Suppose that the Caesarean and Pompeian factions had, each of them, claimed the victory in these battles, and that the historians of each party had uniformly ascribed the advantage to their own side; how could mankind, at this distance, have been able to determine between them? The contrariety is equally strong between the miracles related by Herodotus or Plutarch, and those delivered by Mariana, Bede, or any monkish historian.

The wise lend a very academic faith to every report which favors the passion of the reporter; whether it magnifies his country, his family, or himself, or in any other way strikes in with his natural inclinations and propensities. But what greater temptation than to appear a missionary, a prophet, an ambassador from heaven? Who would not encounter many dangers and difficulties, in order to attain so sublime a character? Or if, by the help of vanity and a heated imagination, a man has first made a convert of himself,

and entered seriously into the delusion I who ever scruples to make use of pious frauds, in support of so holy and meritorious a cause?

The smallest spark may here kindle into the greatest flame; because the materials are always prepared for it. The avidum genus auricularum,[5] the gazing populace, receive greedily, without examination, whatever soothes superstition, and promotes wonder.

How many stories of this nature have in all ages, been detected and exploded in their infancy? How many more have been celebrated for a time, and have afterwards sunk into neglect and oblivion? Where such reports, therefore, fly about, the solution of the phenomenon is obvious; and we in conformity to regular experience and observation, when we account for it by the known and natural principles of credulity and delusion. And shall we, rather than have a recourse to so natural a solution, allow of a miraculous violation of the most established laws of nature?

I need not mention the difficulty of detecting a falsehood in any private or even public history, at the place, where it is said to happen; much more when the scene is removed to ever so small a distance. Even a court of judicature, with all the authority, accuracy, and judgement, which they can employ, find themselves often at a loss to distinguish between truth and falsehood in the most recent actions. But the matter never comes to any issue, if trusted to the common method of altercations and debate and flying rumors; especially when men's passions have taken part on either side.

In the infancy of new religions, the wise and learned commonly esteem the matter too inconsiderable to deserve their attention or regard. And when afterwards they would willingly detect the cheat, in order to undeceive the deluded multitude, the season is now past, and the records and witnesses, which might clear up the matter, have perished beyond recovery.

No means of detection remain, but those which must be drawn from the very testimony itself of the reporters: and these, though always sufficient with the judicious and knowing, are commonly too fine to fall under the comprehension of the vulgar.

98. Upon the whole, then, it appears, that no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof; and that, even supposing it amounted to a proof, it would be opposed by another proof, derived from the very nature of the fact, which it would endeavor to establish. It is experience only, which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience, which assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but subtract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other,

with that assurance which arises from the remainder. But according to the principle here explained, this subtraction, with regard to all popular religions, amounts to an entire annihilation; and therefore we may establish it as a maxim, that no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion.

99. I beg the limitations here made may be remarked, when I say, that a miracle can never be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion. For I own, that otherwise, there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony; though, perhaps, it will be impossible to find any such in all the records of history. Thus, suppose all authors, in all languages, agree, that, from the first of January 1600, there was a total darkness over the whole earth for eight days: suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people: that all travelers, who return from foreign countries, bring us accounts of the same tradition, without the least variation or contradiction: it is evident, that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact, ought to receive it as certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it might be derived. The decay, corruption, and dissolution of nature, is an event rendered probable by so many analogies, that any phenomenon, which seems to have a tendency towards that catastrophe, comes within the reach of human testimony, if that testimony be very extensive and uniform.

But suppose, that all the historians who treat of England, should agree, that, on the first of January 1600, Queen Elizabeth died; that both before and after her death she was seen by her physicians and the whole court, as is usual with persons of her rank; that her successor was acknowledged and proclaimed by the parliament; and that, after being interred a month, she again appeared, resumed the throne, and governed England for three years: I must confess that I should be surprised at the concurrence of so many odd circumstances, but should not have the least inclination to believe so miraculous an event. I should not doubt of her pretended death, and of those other public circumstances that followed it: I should only assert it to have been pretended, and that it neither was, nor possibly could be real. You would in vain object to me the difficulty, and almost impossibility of deceiving the world in an affair of such consequence; the wisdom and solid judgement of that renowned queen; with the little or no advantage which she could reap from so poor an artifice: All this might astonish me; but I would still reply, that the knavery and folly of men are such common phenomena, that I should rather believe the most extraordinary events to arise from their concurrence, than admit of so signal a violation of the laws of nature.

But should this miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion; men, in all ages, have

been so much imposed on by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be a full proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even reject it without farther examination. Though the Being to whom the miracle is ascribed, be, in this case, Almighty, it does not, upon that account, become a whit more probable; since it is impossible for us to know the attributes or actions of such a Being, otherwise than from the experience which we have of his productions, in the usual course of nature. This still reduces us to past observation, and obliges us to compare the instances of the violation of truth in the testimony of men, with those of the violation of the laws of nature by miracles, in order to judge which of them is most likely and probable. As the violations of truth are more common in the testimony concerning religious miracles, than in that concerning any other matter of fact; this must diminish very much the authority of the former testimony, and make us form a general resolution, never to lend any attention to it, with whatever specious pretense it may be covered.

Lord Bacon seems to have embraced the same principles of reasoning. “We ought,” says he, “to make a collection or particular history of all monsters and prodigious births or productions, and in a word of everything new, rare, and extraordinary in nature. But this must be done with the most severe scrutiny, lest we depart from truth. Above all, every relation must be considered as suspicious, which depends in any degree upon religion, as the prodigies of Livy: And no less so, everything that is to be found in the writers of natural magic or alchemy, or such authors, who seem, all of them, to have an unconquerable appetite for falsehood and fable.”[6]

100. I am the better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the Christian Religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on Faith, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure. To make this more evident, let us examine those miracles, related in scripture; and not to lose ourselves in too wide a field, let us confine ourselves to such as we find in the Pentateuch, which we shall examine, according to the principles of these pretended Christians, not as the word or testimony of God himself, but as the production of a mere human writer and historian. Here then we are first to consider a book, presented to us by a barbarous and ignorant people, written in an age when they were still more barbarous, and in all probability long after the facts which it relates, corroborated by no concurring testimony, and resembling those fabulous accounts, which every nation gives of its origin. Upon reading this book, we find it full of prodigies and miracles. It gives an account of a state of the world and of human nature entirely different from the present: Of our fall from that state: Of the age of man,

extended to near a thousand years: Of the destruction of the world by a deluge: Of the arbitrary choice of one people, as the favorites of heaven; and that people the countrymen of the author: Of their deliverance from bondage by prodigies the most astonishing imaginable: I desire anyone to lay his hand upon his heart, and after a serious consideration declare, whether he thinks that the falsehood of such a book, supported by such a testimony, would be more extraordinary and miraculous than all the miracles it relates; which is, however, necessary to make it be received, according to the measures of probability above established.

101. What we have said of miracles may be applied, without any variation, to prophecies; and indeed, all prophecies are real miracles, and as such only, can be admitted as proofs of any revelation. If it did not exceed the capacity of human nature to foretell future events, it would be absurd to employ any prophecy as an argument for a divine mission or authority from heaven. So that, upon the whole, we may conclude, that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: And whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.

Notes

- 1) Plutarch, Marcus Cato
- 2) No Indian, it is evident, could have experience that water did not freeze in cold climates. This is placing nature in a situation quite unknown to him; and it is impossible for him to tell a priori what will result from it. It is making a new experiment, the consequence of which is always uncertain. One may sometimes conjecture from analogy what will follow; but still this is but conjecture. And it must be confessed, that, in the present case of freezing, the event follows contrary to the rules of analogy, and is such as a rational Indian would not look for. The operations of cold upon water are not gradual, according to the degrees of cold; but whenever it comes to the freezing point, the water passes in a moment, from the utmost liquidity to perfect hardness. Such an event, therefore, may be denominated extraordinary, and requires a pretty strong testimony to render it credible to people in a warm climate: But still it is not miraculous, nor contrary to uniform experience of the course of nature in cases where all the circumstances are the same. The inhabitants of Sumatra have always seen water fluid in their own climate, and the freezing of their rivers ought to be deemed a prodigy: But they never saw water in Muscovy during the winter; and therefore

they cannot reasonably be positive what would there be the consequence.

- 3) Sometimes an event may not, in itself, seem to be contrary to the laws of nature, and yet, if it were real, it might, by reason of some circumstances, be denominated a miracle; because, in fact, it is contrary to these laws. Thus if a person, claiming a divine authority, should command a sick person to be well, a healthful man to fall down dead, the clouds to pour rain, the winds to blow, in short, should order many natural events, which immediately follow upon his command; these might justly be esteemed miracles, because they are really, in this case, contrary to the laws of nature. For if any suspicion remain, that the event and command concurred by accident, there is no miracle and no transgression of the laws of nature. If this suspicion be removed, there is evidently a miracle, and a transgression of these laws; because nothing can be more contrary to nature than that the voice or command of a man should have such an influence. A miracle may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent. A miracle may either be discoverable by men or not. This alters not its nature and essence. The raising of a house or ship into the air is a visible miracle. The raising of a feather, when the wind wants ever so little of a force requisite for that purpose, is as real a miracle, though not so sensible with regard to us.
- 4) Histories, iv. 81. Suetonius gives nearly the same account, Lives of the Caesars (Vespasian).
- 5) Lucretius.
- 6) Novum Organum, II, aph. 29.

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On Good and Evil – Fyodor Dostoevsky

From *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Introduction

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky reveals deep psychological insight into the nature of human morality. In this, his greatest work, he expresses the destructive aspects of human freedom which can only be bound by God. In Chapter 4 of that work, the death of an innocent child is seen to be an inescapable objection to God's goodness. In this chapter Alyosha is the religious foil to Ivan, his intellectual older brother.

Text

Love Your Neighbour

"I must make one confession" Ivan began. "I could never understand how one can love one's neighbors. It's just one's neighbors, to my mind, that one can't love, though one might love those at a distance. I once read somewhere of John the Merciful, a saint, that when a hungry, frozen beggar came to him, he took him into his bed, held him in his arms, and began breathing into his mouth, which was putrid and loathsome from some awful disease. I am convinced that he did that from 'self-laceration,' from the self-laceration of falsity, for the sake of the charity imposed by duty, as a penance laid on him. For anyone to love a man, he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone."

"Father Zossima has talked of that more than once," observed Alyosha; "he, too, said that the face of a man often hinders many people not practiced in love, from loving him. But yet there's a great deal of love in mankind, and almost Christ-like love. I know that myself, Ivan."

"Well, I know nothing of it so far, and can't understand it, and the innumerable mass of mankind are with me there. The question is, whether that's due to men's bad qualities or whether it's inherent in their nature. To my thinking, Christ-like love for men is a miracle impossible on earth. He was God. But we are not gods. Suppose I, for instance, suffer intensely. Another can never know how much I suffer, because he is another and not.

And what's more, a man is rarely ready to admit another's suffering (as though it were a distinction). Why won't he admit it, do you think? Because I smell unpleasant, because I have a stupid face, because I once trod on his foot. Besides, there is suffering and suffering; degrading, humiliating suffering such as humbles me—hunger, for instance—my benefactor will perhaps allow me; but when you come to higher suffering—for an idea, for instance—he will very rarely admit that, perhaps because my face strikes him as not at

all what he fancies a man should have who suffers for an idea. And so he deprives me instantly of his favor, and not at all from badness of heart. Beggars, especially genteel beggars, ought never to show themselves, but to ask for charity through the newspapers. One can love one's neighbors in the abstract, or even at a distance, but at close quarters it's almost impossible. If it were as on the stage, in the ballet, where if beggars come in, they wear silken rags and tattered lace and beg for alms dancing gracefully, then one might like looking at them. But even then we should not love them. But enough of that. I simply wanted to show you my point of view. I meant to speak of the suffering of mankind generally, but we had better confine ourselves to the sufferings of the children. That reduces the scope of my argument to a tenth of what it would be. Still we'd better keep to the children, though it does weaken my case. But, in the first place, children can be loved even at close quarters, even when they are dirty, even when they are ugly (I fancy, though, children never are ugly). The second reason why I won't speak of grown-up people is that, besides being disgusting and unworthy of love, they have a compensation—they've eaten the apple and know good and evil, and they have become 'like gods.' They go on eating it still. But the children haven't eaten anything, and are so far innocent. Are you fond of children, Alyosha? I know you are, and you will understand why I prefer to speak of them. If they, too, suffer horribly on earth, they must suffer for their fathers' sins, they must be punished for their fathers, who have eaten the apple; but that reasoning is of the other world and is incomprehensible for the heart of man here on earth. The innocent must not suffer for another's sins, and especially such innocents! You may be surprised at me, Alyosha, but I am awfully fond of children, too. And observe, cruel people, the violent, the rapacious, the Karamazovs are sometimes very fond of children. Children while they are quite little—up to seven, for instance—are so remote from grown-up people they are different creatures, as it were, of a different species. I knew a criminal in prison who had, in the course of his career as a burglar, murdered whole families, including several children. But when he was in prison, he had a strange affection for them. He spent all his time at his window, watching the children playing in the prison yard. He trained one little boy to come up to his window and made great friends with him. . . You don't know why I am telling you all this, Alyosha? My head aches and I am sad."

"You speak with a strange air," observed Alyosha uneasily, "as though you were not quite yourself."

The Inhumanity of Man

"By the way, a Bulgarian I met lately in Moscow," Ivan went on, seeming not to hear his brother's words, "told me about the crimes committed by Turks and Circassians in all parts of Bulgaria through fear of a general rising of the Slavs. They burn villages, murder,

outrage women and children, they nail their prisoners by the ears to the fences, leave them so till morning, and in the morning they hang them—all sorts of things you can't imagine. People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that's a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel. The tiger only tears and gnaws, that's all he can do. He would never think of nailing people by the ears, even if he were able to do it. These Turks took a pleasure in torturing children,—too; cutting the unborn child from the mother's womb, and tossing babies up in the air and catching them on the points of their bayonets before their mothers' eyes. Doing it before the mothers' eyes was what gave zest to the amusement. Here is another scene that I thought very interesting. Imagine a trembling mother with her baby in her arms, a circle of invading Turks around her. They've planned a diversion: they pet the baby, laugh to make it laugh. They succeed, the baby laughs. At that moment a Turk points a pistol four inches from the baby's face. The baby laughs with glee, holds out its little hands to the pistol, and he pulls the trigger in the baby's face and blows out its brains. Artistic, wasn't it? By the way, Turks are particularly fond of sweet things, they say."

"Brother, what are you driving at?" asked Alyosha.

"I think if the devil doesn't exist, but man has created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness."

"Just as he did God, then?" observed Alyosha. "'It's wonderful how you can turn words,' as Polonius says in Hamlet," laughed Ivan. "You turn my words against me. Well, I am glad. Yours must be a fine God, if man created Him in his image and likeness. You asked just now what I was driving at. You see, I am fond of collecting certain facts, and, would you believe, I even copy anecdotes of a certain sort from newspapers and books, and I've already got a fine collection. The Turks, of course, have gone into it, but they are foreigners. I have specimens from home that are even better than the Turks. You know we prefer beating—rods and scourges—that's our national institution. Nailing ears is unthinkable for us, for we are, after all, Europeans. But the rod and the scourge we have always with us and they cannot be taken from us. Abroad now they scarcely do any beating. Manners are more humane, or laws have been passed, so that they don't dare to flog men now. But they make up for it in another way just as national as ours. And so national that it would be practically impossible among us, though I believe we are being inoculated with it, since the religious movement began in our aristocracy. I have a charming pamphlet, translated from the French, describing how, quite recently, five years ago, a murderer, Richard, was executed—a young man, I believe, of three and twenty, who repented and was converted to the Christian faith at the very scaffold. This Richard was an illegitimate child who was given as a child of six by his parents to some shepherds on

the Swiss mountains. They brought him up to work for them. He grew up like a little wild beast among them. The shepherds taught him nothing, and scarcely fed or clothed him, but sent him out at seven to herd the flock in cold and wet, and no one hesitated or scrupled to treat him so.”

“Quite the contrary, they thought they had every right, for Richard had been given to them as a chattel, and they did not even see the necessity of feeding him. Richard himself describes how in those years, like the Prodigal Son in the Gospel, he longed to eat of the mash given to the pigs, which were fattened for sale. But they wouldn’t even give that, and beat him when he stole from the pigs. And that was how he spent all his childhood and his youth, till he grew up and was strong enough to go away and be a thief. The savage began to earn his living as a day laborer in Geneva. He drank what he earned, he lived like a brute, and finished by killing and robbing an old man. He was caught, tried, and condemned to death. They are not sentimentalists there. And in prison he was immediately surrounded by pastors, members of Christian brotherhoods, philanthropic ladies, and the like. They taught him to read and write in prison, and expounded the Gospel to him. They exhorted him, worked upon him, drummed at him incessantly, till at last he solemnly confessed his crime. He was converted. He wrote to the court himself that he was a monster, but that in the end God had vouchsafed him light and shown grace. All Geneva was in excitement about him—all philanthropic and religious Geneva. All the aristocratic and well-bred society of the town rushed to the prison, kissed Richard and embraced him; ‘You are our brother, you have found grace.’ And Richard does nothing but weep with emotion, ‘Yes, I’ve found grace! All my youth and childhood I was glad of pigs’ food, but now even I have found grace. I am dying in the Lord.’ ‘Yes, Richard, die in the Lord; you have shed blood and must die. Though it’s not your fault that you knew not the Lord, when you coveted the pigs’ food and were beaten for stealing it (which was very wrong of you, for stealing is forbidden); but you’ve shed blood and you must die.’ And on the last day, Richard, perfectly limp, did nothing but cry and repeat every minute: ‘This is my happiest day. I am going to the Lord.’ ‘Yes,’ cry the pastors and the judges and philanthropic ladies. ‘This is the happiest day of your life, for you are going to the Lord!’ They all walk or drive to the scaffold in procession behind the prison van. At the scaffold they call to Richard: ‘Die, brother, die in the Lord, for even thou hast found grace!’ And so, covered with his brothers’ kisses, Richard is dragged on to the scaffold, and led to the guillotine. And they chopped off his head in brotherly fashion, because he had found grace. Yes, that’s characteristic.”

“That pamphlet is translated into Russian by some Russian philanthropists of aristocratic rank and evangelical aspirations, and has been distributed gratis for the enlightenment of the people. The case of Richard is interesting because it’s national. Though to us it’s

absurd to cut off a man's head, because he has become our brother and has found grace, yet we have our own specialty, which is all but worse. Our historical pastime is the direct satisfaction of inflicting pain. There are lines in Nekrassov describing how a peasant lashes a horse on the eyes, 'on its meek eyes,' everyone must have seen it. It's peculiarly Russian. He describes how a feeble little nag has foundered under too heavy a load and cannot move. The peasant beats it, beats it savagely, beats it at last not knowing what he is doing in the intoxication of cruelty, thrashes it mercilessly over and over again. 'However weak you are, you must pull, if you die for it.' The nag strains, and then he begins lashing the poor defenseless creature on its weeping, on its 'meek eyes.' The frantic beast tugs and draws the load, trembling all over, gasping for breath, moving sideways, with a sort of unnatural spasmodic action—it's awful in Nekrassov. But that only a horse, and God has horses to be beaten. So the Tatars have taught us, and they left us the knout as a remembrance of it. But men, too, can be beaten. A well-educated, cultured gentleman and his wife beat their own child with a birch-rod, a girl of seven. I have an exact account of it. The papa was glad that the birch was covered with twigs. 'It stings more,' said he, and so he began stinging his daughter. I know for a fact there are people who at every blow are worked up to sensuality, to literal sensuality, which increases progressively at every blow they inflict. They beat for a minute, for five minutes, for ten minutes, more often and more savagely. The child screams. At last the child cannot scream, it gasps, 'Daddy daddy!' By some diabolical unseemly chance the case was brought into court. A counsel is engaged. The Russian people have long called a barrister 'a conscience for hire.' The counsel protests in his client's defense. 'It's such a simple thing,' he says, 'an everyday domestic event. A father corrects his child. To our shame be it said, it is brought into court.' The jury, convinced by him, give a favorable verdict. The public roars with delight that the torturer is acquitted. Ah, pity I wasn't there! I would have proposed to raise a subscription in his honor! Charming pictures. But I've still better things about children. I've collected a great, great deal about Russian children, Alyosha. There was a little girl of five who was hated by her father and mother, 'most worthy and respectable people, of good education and breeding.' You see, I must repeat again, it is a peculiar characteristic of many people, this love of torturing children, and children only. To all other types of humanity these torturers behave mildly and benevolently, like cultivated and humane Europeans; but they are very fond of tormenting children, even fond of children themselves in that sense. it's just their defenselessness that tempts the tormentor, just the angelic confidence of the child who has no refuge and no appeal, that sets his vile blood on fire. In every man, of course, a demon lies hidden—the demon of rage, the demon of lustful heat at the screams of the tortured victim, the demon of lawlessness let off the chain, the demon of diseases that follow on vice, gout, kidney disease, and so on."

“This poor child of five was subjected to every possible torture by those cultivated parents. They beat her, thrashed her, kicked her for no reason till her body was one bruise. Then, they went to greater refinements of cruelty—shut her up all night in the cold and frost in a privy, and because she didn’t ask to be taken up at night (as though a child of five sleeping its angelic, sound sleep could be trained to wake and ask), they smeared her face and filled her mouth with excrement, and it was her mother, her mother did this. And that mother could sleep, hearing the poor child’s groans! Can you understand why a little creature, who can’t even understand what’s done to her, should beat her little aching heart with her tiny fist in the dark and the cold, and weep her meek unresentful tears to dear, kind God to protect her? Do you understand that, friend and brother, you pious and humble novice? Do you understand why this infamy must be and is permitted? Without it, I am told, man could not have existed on earth, for he could not have known good and evil. Why should he know that diabolical good and evil when it costs so much? Why, the whole world of knowledge is not worth that child’s prayer to dear, kind God! I say nothing of the sufferings of grown-up people, they have eaten the apple, damn them, and the devil take them all! But these little ones! I am making you suffer, Alyosha, you are not yourself. I’ll leave off if you like.”

“Never mind. I want to suffer too,” muttered Alyosha.

The Death of an Innocent Child

“One picture, only one more, because it’s so curious, so characteristic, and I have only just read it in some collection of Russian antiquities. I’ve forgotten the name. I must look it up. It was in the darkest days of serfdom at the beginning of the century, and long live the Liberator of the People! There was in those days a general of aristocratic connections, the owner of great estates, one of those men—somewhat exceptional, I believe, even then—who, retiring from the service into a life of leisure, are convinced that they’ve earned absolute power over the lives of their subjects. There were such men then. So our general, settled on his property of two thousand souls, lives in pomp, and domineers over his poor neighbors as though they were dependents and buffoons. He has kennels of hundreds of hounds and nearly a hundred dog-boys—all mounted, and in uniform. One day a serf-boy, a little child of eight, threw a stone in play and hurt the paw of the general’s favorite hound. ‘Why is my favorite dog lame?’ He is told that the boy threw a stone that hurt the dog’s paw. ‘So you did it.’ The general looked the child up and down. ‘Take him.’ He was taken—taken from his mother and kept shut up all night. Early that morning the general comes out on horseback, with the hounds, his dependents, dog-boys, and huntsmen, all mounted around him in full hunting parade. The servants are summoned for their edification, and in front of them all stands the mother of the child.

The child is brought from the lock-up. It's a gloomy, cold, foggy, autumn day, a capital day for hunting. The general orders the child to be undressed; the child is stripped naked. He shivers, numb with terror, not daring to cry. . . 'Make him run,' commands the general. 'Run! run!' shout the dog-boys. The boy runs. . . 'At him!' yells the general, and he sets the whole pack of hounds on the child. The hounds catch him, and tear him to pieces before his mother's eyes!. . . I believe the general was afterwards declared incapable of administering his estates. Well—what did he deserve? To be shot? To be shot for the satisfaction of our moral feelings? Speak, Alyosha!"

"To be shot," murmured Alyosha, lifting his eyes to Ivan with a pale, twisted smile.

"Bravo!" cried Ivan delighted. "If even you say so. . . You're a pretty monk! So there is a little devil sitting in your heart, Alyosha Karamazov!"

"What I said was absurd, but. . . "

"That's just the point, that 'but'!" cried Ivan. "Let me tell you, novice, that the absurd is only too necessary on earth. The world stands on absurdities, and perhaps nothing would have come to pass in it without them. We know what we know!"

"What do you know?"

"I understand nothing," Ivan went on, as though in delirium. "I don't want to understand anything now. I want to stick to the fact. I made up my mind long ago not to understand. If I try to understand anything, I shall be false to the fact, and I have determined to stick to the fact."

"Why are you trying me?" Alyosha cried, with sudden distress. "Will you say what you mean at last?"

"Of course, I will; that's what I've been leading up to. You are dear to me, I don't want to let you go, and I won't give you up to your Zossima."

Ivan for a minute was silent, his face became all at once very sad.

The Problem of Evil

"Listen! I took the case of children only to make my case clearer. Of the other tears of humanity with which the earth is soaked from its crust to its center, I will say nothing. I have narrowed my subject on purpose. I am a bug, and I recognize in all humility that I cannot understand why the world is arranged as it is. Men are themselves to blame, I

suppose; they were given paradise, they wanted freedom, and stole fire from heaven, though they knew they would become unhappy, so there is no need to pity them. With my pitiful, earthly, Euclidian understanding, all I know is that there is suffering and that there are none guilty; that cause follows effect, simply and directly; that everything flows and finds its level—but that’s only Euclidian nonsense, I know that, and I can’t consent to live by it! What comfort is it to me that there are none guilty and that cause follows effect simply and directly, and that I know it?—I must have justice, or I will destroy myself. And not justice in some remote infinite time and space, but here on earth, and that I could see myself. I have believed in it. I want to see it, and if I am dead by then, let me rise again, for if it all happens without me, it will be too unfair. Surely I haven’t suffered simply that I, my crimes and my sufferings, may manure the soil of the future harmony for somebody else. I want to see with my own eyes the hind lie down with the lion and the victim rise up and embrace his murderer. I want to be there when everyone suddenly understands what it has all been for. All the religions of the world are built on this longing, and I am a believer. But then there are the children, and what am I to do about them? That’s a question I can’t answer. For the hundredth time I repeat, there are numbers of questions, but I’ve only taken the children, because in their case what I mean is so unanswerably clear. Listen! If all must suffer to pay for the eternal harmony, what have children to do with it, tell me, please? It’s beyond all comprehension why they should suffer, and why they should pay for the harmony. Why should they, too, furnish material to enrich the soil for the harmony of the future? I understand solidarity in sin among men. I understand solidarity in retribution, too; but there can be no such solidarity with children. And if it is really true that they must share responsibility for all their fathers’ crimes, such a truth is not of this world and is beyond my comprehension. Some jester will say, perhaps, that the child would have grown up and have sinned, but you see he didn’t grow up, he was torn to pieces by the dogs, at eight years old. Oh, Alyosha, I am not blaspheming! I understand, of course, what an upheaval of the universe it will be when everything in heaven and earth blends in one hymn of praise and everything that lives and has lived cries aloud: ‘Thou art just, O Lord, for Thy ways are revealed.’ When the mother embraces the fiend who threw her child to the dogs, and all three cry aloud with tears, ‘Thou art just, O Lord!’ then, of course, the crown of knowledge will be reached and all will be made clear. But what pulls me up here is that I can’t accept that harmony. And while I am on earth, I make haste to take my own measures. You see, Alyosha, perhaps it really may happen that if I live to that moment, or rise again to see it, I, too, perhaps, may cry aloud with the rest, looking at the mother embracing the child’s torturer, ‘Thou art just, O Lord!’ but I don’t want to cry aloud then. While there is still time, I hasten to protect myself, and so I renounce the higher harmony altogether. It’s not worth the tears of that one tortured child who beat itself on the breast with its little fist and prayed in its stinking outhouse, with its unexpiated tears to ‘dear, kind God’! It’s not

worth it, because those tears are unatoned for. They must be atoned for, or there can be no harmony. But how? How are you going to atone for them? Is it possible? By their being avenged? But what do I care for avenging them? What do I care for a hell for oppressors? What good can hell do, since those children have already been tortured? And what becomes of harmony, if there is hell? I want to forgive. I want to embrace. I don't want more suffering. And if the sufferings of children go to swell the sum of sufferings which was necessary to pay for truth, then I protest that the truth is not worth such a price. I don't want the mother to embrace the oppressor who threw her son to the dogs! She dare not forgive him! Let her forgive him for herself, if she will, let her forgive the torturer for the immeasurable suffering of her mother's heart. But the sufferings of her tortured child she has no right to forgive; she dare not forgive the torturer, even if the child were to forgive him! And if that is so, if they dare not forgive, what becomes of harmony? Is there in the whole world a being who would have the right to forgive and could forgive? I don't want harmony. From love for humanity I don't want it. I would rather be left with the unavenged suffering. I would rather remain with my unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation, even if I were wrong. Besides, too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter on it. And so I hasten to give back my entrance ticket, and if I am an honest man I am bound to give it back as soon as possible. And that I am doing. It's not God that I don't accept, Alyosha, only I most respectfully return him the ticket."

"That's rebellion," murmured Alyosha, looking down.

"Rebellion? I am sorry you call it that," said Ivan earnestly. "One can hardly live in rebellion, and I want to live. Tell me yourself, I challenge your answer. Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth."

"No, I wouldn't consent," said Alyosha softly.

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Chapter 4: Ethics

What is value and how does that inform
how we ought to behave?

Ethics is a subfield of Ascertics, which is the philosophy of value. Within ethics, we ask what has value and how should we interact with things, given their value? Or to restate the issues at play: “What are is morally permissible and why?” and “What makes moral and immoral people?”. There are a lot of positions when it comes to these questions. Below are 3 basic positions on the nature of applied value.

1. **Moral Non-Realism** – there are no moral facts;
2. **Moral Relativism** – There are moral facts, but they are created (not discovered) by context and agents and are not universal in scope; and
3. **Moral Realism** – there are universal moral facts which can be discovered.

Within each of these positions there are further sub-positions. For instance, Active Nihilism is an approach that falls within Moral Non-Realism that is distinct from other Non-Realist approaches, such as Moral Error Theory.

As we dive into the primary texts, we should be mindful of a few distinctions. First, we need to open our minds. It is easy to bring a model of ethics to the table that you’ve been given by your family, religion, or culture of origin and assume that it is “common sense morality”, dismissing all discussion of other ethical approaches.

Second, we must resist conflating “is” with “ought”. “Is” describes the world as it occurs, whereas “ought” describes the world as it should be. Hume claims that we can never derive an “ought” from an “is.” Just because something is happening does not mean that it should be happening. Likewise, we should not conflate legal with moral. It might be the case that behaviours that are legal are moral, but it certainly has been the case that some illegal behaviours have been morally permissible and certain legal behaviours have been among the most immoral.

On the Dao – Lao-Tzu

See “On the Dao – Lao-Tzu” in the Metaphysics section.

On I and Thou – Martin Buber

See “On the Intersubjectivity of Persons and the Divine – Martin Buber” in the Philosophy of Religion Section.

On Ambiguity and Freedom – Simone de Beauvoir

“Life in itself is neither good nor evil. It is the place of good and evil, according to what you make it.”

- Montaigne.

“THE continuous work of our life,” says Montaigne, “is to build death.” He quotes the Latin poets: *Prima, quae vitam dedit, hora corpsit*. And again: *Nascentes morimur*. Man knows and thinks this tragic ambivalence which the animal and the plant merely undergo. A new paradox is thereby introduced into his destiny. “Rational animal,” “thinking reed,” he escapes from his natural condition without, however, freeing himself from it. He is still a part of this world of which he is a consciousness. He asserts himself as a pure internality against which no external power can take hold, and he also experiences himself as a thing crushed by the dark weight of other things. At every moment he can grasp the non-temporal truth of his existence. But between the past which no longer is and the future which is not yet, this moment when he exists is nothing. This privilege, which he alone possesses, of being a sovereign and unique subject amidst a universe of objects, is what he shares with all his fellow-men. In turn an object for others, he is nothing more than an individual in the collectivity on which he depends.

As long as there have been men and they have lived, they have all felt this tragic ambiguity of their condition, but as long as there have been philosophers and they have thought, most of them have tried to mask it. They have striven to reduce mind to matter, or to reabsorb matter into mind, or to merge them within a single substance.

Those who have accepted the dualism have established a hierarchy between body and soul which permits of considering as negligible the part of the self which cannot be saved. They have denied death, either by integrating it with life or by promising to man immortality. Or, again they have denied life, considering it as a veil of illusion beneath which is hidden the truth of Nirvana.

And the ethics which they have proposed to their disciples has always pursued the same goal. It has been a matter of eliminating the ambiguity by making oneself pure inwardness or pure externality, by escaping from the sensible world or by being engulfed in it, by yielding to eternity or enclosing oneself in the pure moment. Hegel, with more ingenuity, tried to reject none of the aspects of man's condition and to reconcile them all. According to his system, the moment is preserved in the development of time; Nature asserts itself in the face of Spirit which denies it while assuming it; the individual is again found in the collectivity within which he is lost; and each man's death is fulfilled by being canceled out into the Life of Mankind. One can thus repose in a marvelous optimism where even the bloody wars simply express the fertile restlessness of the Spirit.

At the present time there still exist many doctrines which choose to leave in the shadow certain troubling aspects of a too complex situation. But their attempt to lie to us is in vain. Cowardice doesn't pay. Those reasonable metaphysics, those consoling ethics with which they would like to entice us only accentuate the disorder from which we suffer. Men of today seem to feel more acutely than ever the paradox of their condition. They know themselves to be the supreme end to which all action should be subordinated, but the exigencies of action force them to treat one another as instruments or obstacles, as means. The more widespread their mastery of the world, the more they find themselves crushed by uncontrollable forces. Though they are masters of the atomic bomb, yet it is created only to destroy them. Each one has the incomparable taste in his mouth of his own life, and yet each feels himself more insignificant than an insect within the immense collectivity whose limits are one with the earth's. Perhaps in no other age have they manifested their grandeur more brilliantly, and in no other age has this grandeur been so horribly flouted. In spite of so many stubborn lies, at every moment, at every opportunity, the truth comes to light, the truth of life and death, of my solitude and my bond with the world, of my freedom and my servitude, of the insignificance and the sovereign importance of each man and all men. There was Stalingrad and there was Buchenwald, and neither of the two wipes out the other. Since we do not succeed in fleeing it, let us therefore try to look the truth in the face. Let us try to assume our fundamental ambiguity. It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our life that we must draw our strength to live and our reason for acting.

From the very beginning, existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity. It was by affirming the irreducible character of ambiguity that Kierkegaard opposed himself to Hegel, and it is by ambiguity that, in our own generation, Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, fundamentally defined man, that being whose being is not to be, that subjectivity which realizes itself only as a presence in the world, that engaged freedom, that surging of the for-oneself which is immediately given for others. But it is also claimed that existentialism is a philosophy of the absurd and of despair. It encloses man in a sterile anguish, in an empty subjectivity. It is incapable of furnishing him with any principle for making choices. Let him do as he pleases. In any case, the game is lost. Does not Sartre declare, in effect, that man is a “useless passion,” that he tries in vain to realize the synthesis of the for-oneself and the in-oneself, to make himself God? It is true. But it is also true that the most optimistic ethics have all begun by emphasizing the element of failure involved in the condition of man; without failure, no ethics; for a being who, from the very start, would be an exact co-incidence with himself, in a perfect plenitude, the notion of having-to-be would have no meaning. One does not offer an ethics to a God. It is impossible to propose any to man if one defines him as nature, as something given. The so-called psychological or empirical ethics manage to establish themselves only by introducing surreptitiously some flaw within the man thing which they have first defined. Hegel tells us in the last part of *The Phenomenology of Mind* that moral consciousness can exist only to the extent that there is disagreement between nature and morality. It would disappear if the ethical law became the natural law. To such an extent that by a paradoxical “displacement,” if moral action is the absolute goal, the absolute goal is also that moral action may not be present. This means that there can be a having-to-be only for a being who, according to the existentialist definition, questions himself in his being, a being who is at a distance from himself and who has to be his being.

Well and good. But it is still necessary for the failure to be surmounted, and existentialist ontology does not allow this hope. Man’s passion is useless; he has no means for becoming the being that he is not. That too is true. And it is also true that in *Being and Nothingness* Sartre has insisted above all on the abortive aspect of the human adventure. It is only in the last pages that he opens up the perspective for an ethics. However, if we reflect upon his descriptions of existence, we perceive that they are far from condemning man without recourse.

The failure described in *Being and Nothingness* is definitive, but it is also ambiguous. Man, Sartre tells us, is “a being who *makes himself* a lack of being *in order that there might be* being.” That means, first of all, that his passion is not inflicted upon him from without. He chooses it. It is his very being and, as such, does not imply the idea of unhappiness. If this choice is considered as useless, it is because there exists no absolute value before the

passion of man, outside of it, in relation to which one might distinguish the useless from the useful. The word “useful” has not yet received a meaning on the level of description where *Being and Nothingness* is situated. It can be defined only in the human world established by man’s projects and the ends he sets up. In the original helplessness from which man surges up, nothing is useful, nothing is useless. It must therefore be understood that the passion to which man has acquiesced finds no external justification. No outside appeal, no objective necessity permits of its being called useful. It has no reason to will itself. But this does not mean that it can not justify itself, that it can not *give itself* reasons for being that it does not *have*. And indeed Sartre tells us that man makes himself this lack of being *in order that* there might be being. The term *in order that* clearly indicates an intentionality. It is not in vain that man nullifies being. Thanks to him, being is disclosed and he desires this disclosure. There is an original type of attachment to being which is not the relationship “wanting to be” but rather “wanting to disclose being.” Now, here there is not failure, but rather success. This end, which man proposes to himself by making himself lack of being, is, in effect, realized by him. By uprooting himself from the world, man makes himself present to the world and makes the world present to him. I should like to be the landscape which I am contemplating, I should like this sky, this quiet water to think themselves within me, that it might be I whom they express in flesh and bone, and I remain at a distance. But it is also by this distance that the sky and the water exist before me. My contemplation is an excruciation only because it is also a joy. I can not appropriate the snow field where I slide. It remains foreign, forbidden, but I take delight in this very effort toward an impossible possession. I experience it as a triumph, not as a defeat. This means that man, in his vain attempt to *be* God, makes himself exist as man, and if he is satisfied with this existence, he coincides exactly with himself. It is not granted him to exist without tending toward this being which he will never be. But it is possible for him to want this tension even with the failure which it involves. His being is lack of being, but this lack has a way of being which is precisely existence. In Hegelian terms it might be said that we have here a negation of the negation by which the positive is re-established. Man makes himself a lack, but he can deny the lack as lack and affirm himself as a positive existence. He then assumes the failure. And the condemned action, insofar as it is an effort to be, finds its validity insofar as it is a manifestation of existence. However, rather than being a Hegelian act of surpassing, it is a matter of a conversion. For in Hegel the surpassed terms are preserved only as abstract moments, whereas we consider that existence still remains a negativity in the positive affirmation of itself. And it does not appear, in its turn, as the term of a further synthesis. The failure is not surpassed, but assumed. Existence asserts itself as an absolute which must seek its justification within itself and not suppress itself, even though it may be lost by preserving itself. To attain his truth, man must not attempt to dispel the ambiguity of his being but, on the contrary, accept the task of realizing it. He

rejoins himself only to the extent that he agrees to remain at a distance from himself. This conversion is sharply distinguished from the Stoic conversion in that it does not claim to oppose to the sensible universe a formal freedom which is without content. To exist genuinely is not to deny this spontaneous movement of my transcendence, but only to refuse to lose myself in it. Existentialist conversion should rather be compared to Husserlian reduction: let man put his will to be "in parentheses" and he will thereby be brought to the consciousness of his true condition. And just as phenomenological reduction prevents the errors of dogmatism by suspending all affirmation concerning the mode of reality of the external world, whose flesh and bone presence the reduction does not, however, contest, so existentialist conversion does not suppress my instincts, desires, plans, and passions. It merely prevents any possibility of failure by refusing to set up as absolutes the ends toward which my transcendence thrusts itself, and by considering them in their connection with the freedom which projects them.

The first implication of such an attitude is that the genuine man will not agree to recognize any foreign absolute. When a man projects into an ideal heaven that impossible synthesis of the for-itself and the in-itself that is called God, it is because he wishes the regard of this existing Being to change his existence into being; but if he agrees not to be in order to exist genuinely, he will abandon the dream of an inhuman objectivity. He will understand that it is not a matter of being right in the eyes of a God, but of being right in his own eyes. Renouncing the thought of seeking the guarantee for his existence outside of himself, he will also refuse to believe in unconditioned values which would set themselves up athwart his freedom like things. Value is this lacking-being of which freedom *makes itself* a lack; and it is because the latter makes itself a lack that value appears. It is desire which creates the desirable, and the project which sets up the end. It is human existence which makes values spring up in the world on the basis of which it will be able to judge the enterprise in which it will be engaged. But first it locates itself beyond any pessimism, as beyond any optimism, for the fact of its original springing forth is a pure contingency. Before existence there is no more reason to exist than not to exist. The lack of existence can not be evaluated since it is the fact on the basis of which all evaluation is defined. It can not be compared to anything for there is nothing outside of it to serve as a term of comparison. This rejection of any extrinsic justification also confirms the rejection of an original pessimism which we posited at the beginning. Since it is unjustifiable from without, to declare from without that it is unjustifiable is not to condemn it. And the truth is that outside of existence there is nobody. Man exists. For him it is not a question of wondering whether his presence in the world is useful, whether life is worth the trouble of being lived. These questions make no sense. It is a matter of knowing whether he wants to live and under what conditions.

But if man is free to define for himself the conditions of a life which is valid in his own eyes, can he not choose whatever he likes and act however he likes? Dostoevsky asserted, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." Today's believers use this formula for their own advantage. To re-establish man at the heart of his destiny is, they claim, to repudiate all ethics. However, far from God's absence authorizing all license, the contrary is the case, because man is abandoned on the earth, because his acts are definitive, absolute engagements. He bears the responsibility for a world which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed, and his victories as well. A God can pardon, efface, and compensate. But if God does not exist, man's faults are inextinguishable. If it is claimed that, whatever the case may be, this earthly stake has no importance, this is precisely because one invokes that inhuman objectivity which we declined at the start. One can not start by saying that our earthly destiny *has* or *has not* importance, for it depends upon us to give it importance. It is up to man to make it important to be a man, and he alone can feel his success or failure. And if it is again said that nothing forces him to try to justify his being in this way, then one is playing upon the notion of freedom in a dishonest way. The believer is also free to sin. The divine law is imposed upon him only from the moment he decides to save his soul. In the Christian religion, though one speaks very little about them today, there are also the damned. Thus, on the earthly plane, a life which does not seek to ground itself will be a pure contingency. But it is permitted to wish to give itself a meaning and a truth, and it then meets rigorous demands within its own heart.

However, even among the proponents of secular ethics, there are many who charge existentialism with offering no objective content to the moral act. It is said that this philosophy is subjective, even solipsistic. If he is once enclosed within himself, how can man get out? But there too we have a great deal of dishonesty. It is rather well known that the fact of being a subject is a universal fact and that the Cartesian *cogito* expresses both the most individual experience and the most objective truth. By affirming that the source of all values resides in the freedom of man, existentialism merely carries on the tradition of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, who, in the words of Hegel himself, "have taken for their point of departure the principle according to which the essence of right and duty and the essence of the thinking and willing subject are absolutely identical." The idea that defines all humanism is that the world is not a given world, foreign to man, one to which he has to force himself to yield without. It is the world willed by man, insofar as his will expresses his genuine reality.

Some will answer, "All well and good. But Kant escapes solipsism because for him genuine reality is the human person insofar as it transcends its empirical embodiment and chooses to be universal." And doubtless Hegel asserted that the "right of individuals to

their particularity is equally contained in ethical substantiality, since particularity is the extreme, phenomenal modality in which moral reality exists (*Philosophy of Right*, ? 154).” But for him particularity appears only as a moment of the totality in which it must surpass itself. Whereas for existentialism, it is not impersonal universal man who is the source of values, but the plurality of concrete – particular men projecting themselves toward their ends on the basis of situations whose particularity is as radical and as irreducible as subjectivity itself. How could men, originally separated, get together?

And, indeed, we are coming to the real situation of the problem. But to state it is not to demonstrate that it can not be resolved. On the contrary, we must here again invoke the notion of Hegelian “displacement.” There is an ethics only if there is a problem to solve. And it can be said, by inverting the preceding line of argument, that the ethics which have given solutions by effacing the fact of the separation of men are not valid precisely because there is this separation. An ethics of ambiguity will be one which will refuse to deny *a priori* that separate existants can, at the same time, be bound to each other, that their individual freedoms can forge laws valid for all.

Before undertaking the quest for a solution, it is interesting to note that the notion of situation and the recognition of separation which it implies are not peculiar to existentialism. We also meet it in Marxism which, from one point of view, can be considered as an apotheosis of subjectivity. Like all radical humanism, Marxism rejects the idea of an inhuman objectivity and locates itself in the tradition of Kant and Hegel. Unlike the old kind of utopian socialism which confronted earthly order with the archetypes of justice, Order, and Good, Marx does not consider that certain human situations are, in themselves and absolutely, preferable to others. It is the needs of people, the revolt of a class, which define aims and goals. It is from within a rejected situation, in the light of this rejection, that a new state appears as desirable; only the will of men decides; and it is on the basis of a certain individual act of rooting itself in the historical and economic world that this will thrusts itself, toward the future and then chooses a perspective where such words as goal, progress, efficacy, success, failure, action, adversaries, instruments, and obstacles, have a meaning. Then certain acts can be regarded as good and others as bad.

In order for the universe of revolutionary values to arise, a subjective movement must create them in revolt and hope. And this movement appears so essential to Marxists that if an intellectual or a bourgeois also claims to want revolution, they distrust him. They think that it is only from the outside, by abstract recognition, that the bourgeois intellectual can adhere to these values which he himself has not set up. Regardless of what he does, his situation makes it impossible for the ends pursued by proletarians to be

absolutely his ends too, since it is not the very impulse of his life which has begotten them.

However, in Marxism, if it is true that the goal and the meaning of action are defined by human wills, these wills do not appear as free. They are the reflection of objective conditions by which the situation of the class or the people under consideration is defined. In the present moment of the development of capitalism, the proletariat can not help wanting its elimination as a class. Subjectivity is re-absorbed into the objectivity of the given world. Revolt, need, hope, rejection, and desire are only the resultants of external forces. The psychology of behavior endeavors to explain this alchemy.

It is known that that is the essential point on which existentialist ontology is opposed to dialectical materialism. We think that the meaning of the situation does not impose itself on the consciousness of a passive subject, that it surges up only by the disclosure which a free subject effects in his project. It appears evident to us that in order to adhere to Marxism, to enroll in a party, and in one rather than another, to be actively attached to it, even a Marxist needs a decision whose source is only in himself. And this autonomy is not the privilege (or the defect) of the intellectual or - the bourgeois. The proletariat, taken as a whole, as a class, can become conscious of its situation in more than one way. It can want the revolution to be brought about by one party or another. It can let itself be lured on, as happened to the German proletariat, or can sleep in the dull comfort which capitalism grants it, as does the American proletariat. It may be said that in all these cases it is betraying; still, it must be free to betray. Or, if one pretends to distinguish the real proletariat from a treacherous proletariat, or a misguided or unconscious or mystified one, then it is no longer a flesh and blood proletariat that one is dealing with, but the idea of a proletariat, one of those ideas which Marx ridiculed.

Besides, in practice, Marxism does not always deny freedom. The very notion of action would lose all meaning if history were a mechanical unrolling in which man appears only as a passive conductor of outside forces. By acting, as also by preaching action, the Marxist revolutionary asserts himself as a veritable agent; he assumes himself to be free. And it is even curious to note that most Marxists of today - unlike Marx himself - feel no repugnance at the edifying dullness of moralizing speeches. They do not limit themselves to finding fault with their adversaries in the name of historical realism. When they tax them with cowardice, lying, selfishness, and venality, they very well mean to condemn them in the name of a moralism superior to history. Likewise, in the eulogies which they bestow upon each other they exalt the eternal virtues, courage, abnegation, lucidity, integrity. It may be said that all these words are used for propagandistic purposes, that it is only a matter of expedient language. But this is to admit that this language is heard,

that it awakens an echo in the hearts of those to whom it is addressed. Now, neither scorn nor esteem would have any meaning if one regarded the acts of a man as a purely mechanical resultant. In order for men to become indignant or to admire, they must be conscious of their own freedom and the freedom of others. Thus, everything occurs within each man and in the collective tactics as if men were free. But then what revelation can a coherent humanism hope to oppose to the testimony which man brings to bear upon himself? So Marxists often find themselves having to confirm this belief in freedom, even if they have to reconcile it with determination as well as they can.

However, while this concession is wrested from them by the very practice of action, it is in the name of action that they attempt to condemn a philosophy of freedom. They declare authoritatively that the existence of freedom would make any concerted enterprise impossible. According to them, if the individual were not constrained by the external world to want this rather than that, there would be nothing to defend him against his whims. Here, in different language, we again meet the charge formulated by the respectful believer of supernatural imperatives. In the eyes of the Marxist, as of the Christian, it seems that to act freely is to give up justifying one's acts. This is a curious reversal of the Kantian "you must; therefore you can," Kant postulates freedom in the name of morality. The Marxist, on the contrary, declares, "You must; therefore, you can not." To him a man's action seems valid only if the man has not helped set it going by an internal movement. To admit the ontological possibility of a choice is already to betray the Cause. Does this mean that the revolutionary attitude in any way gives up being a moral attitude? It would be logical, since we observed with Hegel that it is only insofar as the choice is not realized at first that it can be set up as a moral choice. But here again Marxist thought hesitates. It sneers at idealistic ethics which do not bite into the world; but its scoffing signifies that there can be no ethics outside of action, not that action lowers itself to the level of a simple natural process. It is quite evident that the revolutionary enterprise has a human meaning. Lenin's remark^[1], which says, in substance, "I call any action useful to the party moral action; I call it immoral if it is harmful to the party," cuts two ways. On the one hand, he refuses to accept outdated values, but he also sees in political operation a total manifestation of man as having-to-be at the same time as being. Lenin refuses to set up ethics abstractly because he means to realize it effectively. And yet a moral idea is present in the words, writings, and acts of Marxists. It is contradictory, then, to reject with horror the moment of choice which is precisely the moment when spirit passes into nature, the moment of the concrete fulfillment of man and morality.

As for us, whatever the case may be, we believe in freedom. Is it true that this belief must lead us to despair? Must we grant this curious paradox: that from the moment a man

recognizes himself as free, he is prohibited from wishing for anything?

On the contrary, it appears to us that by turning toward this freedom we are going to discover a principle of action whose range will be universal. The characteristic feature of all ethics is to consider human life as a game that can be won or lost and to teach man the means of winning. Now, we have seen that the original scheme of man is ambiguous: he wants to be, and to the extent that he coincides with this wish, he fails. All the plans in which this will to be is actualized are condemned; and the ends circumscribed by these plans remain mirages. Human transcendence is vainly engulfed in those miscarried attempts. But man also wills himself to be a disclosure of being, and if he coincides with this wish, he wins, for the fact is that the world becomes present by his presence in it. But the disclosure implies a perpetual tension to keep being at a certain distance, to tear oneself from the world, and to assert oneself as a freedom. To wish for the disclosure of the world and to assert oneself as freedom are one and the same movement. Freedom is the source from which all significations and all values spring. It is the original condition of all justification of existence. The man who seeks to justify his life must want freedom itself absolutely and above everything else. At the same time that it requires the realization of concrete ends, of particular projects, it requires itself universally. It is not a ready-made value which offers itself from the outside to my abstract adherence, but it appears (not on the plane of facility, but on the moral plane) as a cause of itself. It is necessarily summoned up by the values which it sets up and through which it sets itself up. It cannot establish a denial of itself, for in denying itself, it would deny the possibility of any foundation. To will oneself moral and to will oneself free are one and the same decision.

It seems that the Hegelian notion of “displacement” which we relied on a little while ago is now turning against us. There is ethics only if ethical action is not present. Now, Sartre declares that every man is free, that there is no way of his not being free. When he wants to escape his destiny, he is still freely fleeing it. Does not this presence of a so to speak natural freedom contradict the notion of ethical freedom? What meaning can there be in the words *to will oneself free*, since at the beginning we *are* free? It is contradictory to set freedom up as something conquered if at first it is something given.

This objection would mean something only if freedom were a thing or a quality naturally attached to a thing. Then, in effect, one would either have it or not have it. But the fact is that it merges with the very movement of this ambiguous reality which is called existence and which is only by making itself be; to such an extent that it is precisely only by having to be conquered that it gives itself. To will oneself free is to effect the transition from nature to morality by establishing a genuine freedom on the original upsurge of our

existence.

Every man is originally free, in the sense that he spontaneously casts himself into the world. But if we consider this spontaneity in its facticity, it appears to us only as a pure contingency, an upsurging as stupid as the clinamen of the Epicurean atom which turned up at any moment whatsoever from any direction whatsoever. And it was quite necessary for the atom to arrive somewhere. But its movement was not justified by this result which had not been chosen. It remained absurd. Thus, human spontaneity always projects itself toward something. The psychoanalyst discovers a meaning even in abortive acts and attacks of hysteria. But in order for this meaning to justify the transcendence which discloses it, it must itself be founded, which it will never be if I do not choose to found it myself. Now, I can evade this choice. We have said that it would be contradictory deliberately to will oneself not free. But one can choose not to will himself free. In laziness, heedlessness, capriciousness, cowardice, impatience, one contests the meaning of the project at the very moment that one defines it. The spontaneity of the subject is then merely a vain living palpitation, its movement toward the object is a flight, and itself is an absence. To convert the absence into presence, to convert my flight into will, I must assume my project positively. It is not a matter of retiring into the completely inner and, moreover, abstract movement of a given spontaneity, but of adhering to the concrete and particular movement by which this spontaneity defines itself by thrusting itself toward an end. It is through this end that it sets up that my spontaneity confirms itself by reflecting upon itself. Then, by a single movement, my will, establishing the content of the act, is legitimized by it. I realize my escape toward the other as a freedom when, assuming the presence of the object, I thereby assume myself before it as a presence. But this justification requires a constant tension. My project is never founded; it founds itself. To avoid the anguish of this permanent choice, one may attempt to flee into the object itself, to engulf one's own presence in it. In the servitude of the serious, the original spontaneity strives to deny itself. It strives in vain, and meanwhile it then fails to fulfill itself as moral freedom.

We have just described only the subjective and formal aspect of this freedom. But we also ought to ask ourselves whether one can will oneself free in any matter, whatsoever it may be. It must first be observed that this will is developed in the course of time. It is in time that the goal is pursued and that freedom confirms itself. And this assumes that it is realized as a unity in the unfolding of time. One escapes the absurdity of the clinamen only by escaping the absurdity of the pure moment. An existence would be unable to found itself if moment by moment it crumbled into nothingness. That is why no moral question presents itself to the child as long as he is still incapable of recognizing himself in the past or seeing himself in the future. It is only when the moments of his life begin to

be organized into behavior that he can decide and choose. The value of the chosen end is confined and, reciprocally, the genuineness of the choice is manifested concretely through patience, courage, and fidelity. If I leave behind an act which I have accomplished, it becomes a thing by falling into the past. It is no longer anything but a stupid and opaque fact. In order to prevent this metamorphosis, I must ceaselessly return to it and justify it in the unity of the project in which I am engaged. Setting up the movement of my transcendence requires that I never let it uselessly fall back upon itself, that I prolong it indefinitely. Thus I cannot genuinely desire an end today without desiring it through my whole existence, insofar as it is the future of this present moment and insofar as it is the surpassed past of days to come. To will is to engage myself to persevere in my will. This does not mean that I ought not aim at any limited end. I may desire absolutely and forever a revelation of a moment. This means that the value of this provisional end will be confirmed indefinitely. But this living confirmation cannot be merely contemplative and verbal. It is carried out in an act. The goal toward which I surpass myself must appear to me as a point of departure toward a new act of surpassing. Thus, a creative freedom develops happily without ever congealing into unjustified facticity. The creator leans upon anterior creations in order to create the possibility of new creations. His present project embraces the past and places confidence in the freedom to come, a confidence which is never disappointed. It discloses being at the end of a further disclosure. At each moment freedom is confirmed through all creation.

However, man does not create the world. He succeeds in disclosing it only through the resistance which the world opposes to him. The will is defined only by raising obstacles, and by the contingency of facticity certain obstacles let themselves be conquered, and others do not. This is what Descartes expressed when he said that the freedom of man is infinite, but his power is limited. How can the presence of these limits be reconciled with the idea of a freedom confirming itself as a unity and an indefinite movement?

In the face of an obstacle which it is impossible to overcome, stubbornness is stupid. If I persist in beating my fist against a stone wall, my freedom exhausts itself in this useless gesture without succeeding in giving itself a content. It debases itself in a vain contingency. Yet, there is hardly a sadder virtue than resignation. It transforms into phantoms and contingent reveries projects which had at the beginning been set up as will and freedom. A young man has hoped for a happy or useful or glorious life. If the man he has become looks upon these miscarried attempts of his adolescence with disillusioned indifference, there they are, forever frozen in the dead past. When an effort fails, one declares bitterly that he has lost time and wasted his powers. The failure condemns that whole part of ourselves which we had engaged in the effort. It was to escape this dilemma that the Stoics preached indifference. We could indeed assert our freedom against all

constraint if we agreed to renounce the particularity of our projects. If a door refuses to open, let us accept not opening it and there we are free. But by doing that, one manages only to save an abstract notion of freedom. It is emptied of all content and all truth. The power of man ceases to be limited because it is annulled. It is the particularity of the project which determines the limitation of the power, but it is also what gives the project its content and permits it to be set up. There are people who are filled with such horror at the idea of a defeat that they keep themselves from ever doing anything. But no one would dream of considering this gloomy passivity as the triumph of freedom.

The truth is that in order for my freedom not to risk coming to grief against the obstacle which its very engagement has raised, in order that it might still pursue its movement in the face of the failure, it must, by giving itself a particular content, aim by means of it at an end which is nothing else but precisely the free movement of existence. Popular opinion is quite right in admiring a man who, having been ruined or having suffered an accident, knows how to gain the upper hand, that is, renew his engagement in the world, thereby strongly asserting the independence of freedom in relation to thing. Thus, when the sick Van Gogh calmly accepted the prospect of a future in which he would be unable to paint any more, there was no sterile resignation. For him painting was a personal way of life and of communication with others which in another form could be continued even in an asylum. The past will be integrated and freedom will be confirmed in a renunciation of this kind. It will be lived in both heartbreak and joy. In heartbreak, because the project is then robbed of its particularity - it sacrifices its flesh and blood. But in joy, since at the moment one releases his hold, he again finds his hands free and ready to stretch out toward a new future. But this act of passing beyond is conceivable only if what the content has in view is not to bar up the future, but, on the contrary, to plan new possibilities. This brings us back by another route to what we had already indicated. My freedom must not seek to trap being but to disclose it. The disclosure is the transition from being to existence. The goal which my freedom aims at is conquering existence across the always inadequate density of being.

However, such salvation is only possible if, despite obstacles and failures, a man preserves the disposal of his future, if the situation opens up more possibilities to him. In case his transcendence is cut off from his goal or there is no longer any hold on objects which might give it a valid content, his spontaneity is dissipated without founding anything. Then he may not justify his existence positively and he feels its contingency with wretched disgust. There is no more obnoxious way to punish a man than to force him to perform acts which make no sense to him, as when one empties and fills the same ditch indefinitely, when one makes soldiers who are being punished march up and down, or when one forces a schoolboy to copy lines. Revolts broke out in Italy in September 1946

because the unemployed were set to breaking pebbles which served no purpose whatever. As is well known, this was also the weakness which ruined the national workshops in 1848. This mystification of useless effort is more intolerable than fatigue. Life imprisonment is the most horrible of punishments because it preserves existence in its pure facticity but forbids it all legitimation. A freedom cannot will itself without willing itself as an indefinite movement. It must absolutely reject the constraints which arrest its drive toward itself. This rejection takes on a positive aspect when the constraint is natural. One rejects the illness by curing it. But it again assumes the negative aspect of revolt when the oppressor is a human freedom. One cannot deny being: the in-itself is, and negation has no hold over this being, this pure positivity; one does not escape this fullness: a destroyed house is a ruin; a broken chain is scrap iron: one attains only signification and, through it, the for-itself which is projected there; the for-itself carries nothingness in its heart and can be annihilated, whether in the very upsurge of its existence or through the world in which it exists. The prison is repudiated as such when the prisoner escapes. But revolt, insofar as it is pure negative movement, remains abstract. It is fulfilled as freedom only by returning to the positive, that is, by giving itself a content through action, escape, political struggle, revolution. Human transcendence then seeks, with the destruction of the given situation, the whole future which will flow from its victory. It resumes its indefinite rapport with itself. There are limited situations where this return to the positive is impossible, where the future is radically blocked off. Revolt can then be achieved only in the definitive rejection of the imposed situation, in suicide.

It can be seen that, on the one hand, freedom can always save itself, for it is realized as a disclosure of existence through its very failures, and it can again confirm itself by a death freely chosen. But, on the other hand, the situations which it discloses through its project toward itself do not appear as equivalents. It regards as privileged situations those which permit it to realize itself as indefinite movement; that is, it wishes to pass beyond everything which limits its power; and yet, this power is always limited. Thus, just as life is identified with the will-to-live, freedom always appears as a movement of liberation. It is only by prolonging itself through the freedom of others that it manages to surpass death itself and to realize itself as an indefinite unity. Later on we shall see what problems such a relationship raises. For the time being it is enough for us to have established the fact that the words "to will oneself free" have a positive and concrete meaning. If man wishes to save his existence, as only he himself can do, his original spontaneity must be raised to the height of moral freedom by taking itself as an end through the disclosure of a particular content.

But a new question is immediately raised. If man has one and only one way to save his

existence, how can he choose not to choose it in all cases? How is a bad willing possible? We meet with this problem in all ethics, since it is precisely the possibility of a perverted willing which gives a meaning to the idea of virtue. We know the answer of Socrates, of Plato, of Spinoza: "No one is willfully bad." And if Good is a transcendent thing which is more or less foreign to man, one imagines that the mistake can be explained by error. But if one grants that the moral world is the world genuinely willed by man, all possibility of error is eliminated. Moreover, in Kantian ethics, which is at the origin of all ethics of autonomy, it is very difficult to account for an evil will. As the choice of his character which the subject makes is achieved in the intelligible world by a purely rational will, one cannot understand how the latter expressly rejects the law which it gives to itself. But this is because Kantism defined man as a pure positivity, and it therefore recognized no other possibility in him than coincidence with himself. We, too, define morality by this adhesion to the self; and this is why we say that man can not positively decide between the negation and the assumption of his freedom, for as soon as he decides, he assumes it. He cannot positively will not to be free for such a willing would be self-destructive. Only, unlike Kant, we do not see man as being essentially a positive will. On the contrary, he is first defined as a negativity. He is first at a distance from himself. He can coincide with himself only by agreeing never to rejoin himself. There is within him a perpetual playing with the negative, and he thereby escapes himself, he escapes his freedom. And it is precisely because an evil will is here possible that the words "to will oneself free" have a meaning. Therefore, not only do we assert that the existentialist doctrine permits the elaboration of an ethics, but it even appears to us as the only philosophy in which an ethics has its place. For, in a metaphysics of transcendence, in the classical sense of the term, evil is reduced to error; and in humanistic philosophies it is impossible to account for it, man being defined as complete in a complete world. Existentialism alone gives - like religions - a real role to evil, and it is this, perhaps, which make its judgments so gloomy. Men do not like to feel themselves in danger. Yet, it is because there are real dangers, real failures and real earthly damnation that words like victory, wisdom, or joy have meaning. Nothing is decided in advance, and it is because man has something to lose and because he can lose that he can also win.

Therefore, in the very condition of man there enters the possibility of not fulfilling this condition. In order to fulfill it he must assume himself as a being who "makes himself a lack of being so that there might be being." But the trick of dishonesty permits stopping at any moment whatsoever. One may hesitate to make oneself a lack of being, one may withdraw before existence, or one may falsely assert oneself as being, or assert oneself as nothingness. One may realize his freedom only as an abstract independence, or, on the contrary, reject with despair the distance which separates us from being. All errors are possible since man is a negativity, and they are motivated by the anguish he feels in the

face of his freedom. Concretely, men slide incoherently from one attitude to another. We shall limit ourselves to describing in their abstract form those which we have just indicated.

Notes

1. There is no record of any such remark by Lenin. – [MIA Editors]

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Simone de Beauvoir, “The Ethics of Ambiguity,” in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (Citadel Press, 1949),
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/ch01.htm>.

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On Slave and Master Morality – Nietzsche

Introduction

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche detects two types of morality mixed not only in higher civilization but also in the psychology of the individual. Master-morality values power, nobility, and independence: it stands “beyond good and evil.” Slave-morality values sympathy, kindness, and humility and is regarded by Nietzsche as “herd-morality.” The history of society, Nietzsche believes, is the conflict between these two outlooks: the herd attempts to impose its values universally, but the noble master transcends their “mediocrity.”²³ The below selection is taken from the book *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Text

[Origin of Aristocracy]

257. Every elevation of the type “man,” has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic

²³ Introduction taken from *Reading for Philosophical Inquiry* by Archie and Archie.

society and so it will always be—a society believing in a long scale of gradations of rank and differences of worth among human beings, and requiring slavery in some form or other. Without the pathos of distance, such as grows out of the incarnated difference of classes, out of the constant out-looking and down-looking of the ruling caste on subordinates and instruments, and out of their equally constant practice of obeying and commanding, of keeping down and keeping at a distance—that other more mysterious pathos could never have arisen, the longing for an ever new widening of distance within the soul itself, the formation of ever higher, rarer, further, more extended, more comprehensive states, in short, just the elevation of the type “man,” the continued “self-surmounting of man,” to use a moral formula in a supermoral sense.

To be sure, one must not resign oneself to any humanitarian illusions about the history of the origin of an aristocratic society (that is to say, of the preliminary condition for the elevation of the type “man”): the truth is hard. Let us acknowledge unprejudicedly how every higher civilization hitherto has originated! Men with a still natural nature, barbarians in every terrible sense of the word, men of prey, still in possession of unbroken strength of will and desire for power, threw themselves upon weaker, more moral, more peaceful races (perhaps trading or cattle-rearing communities), or upon old mellow civilizations in which the final vital force was flickering out in brilliant fireworks of wit and depravity. At the commencement, the noble caste was always the barbarian caste: their superiority did not consist first of all in their physical, but in their psychical power—they were more complete men (which at every point also implies the same as “more complete beasts”).

[Higher Class of Being]

258. Corruption—as the indication that anarchy threatens to break out among the instincts, and that the foundation of the emotions, called “life,” is convulsed—is something radically different according to the organization in which it manifests itself. When, for instance, an aristocracy like that of France at the beginning of the Revolution, flung away its privileges with sublime disgust and sacrificed itself to an excess of its moral sentiments, it was corruption:—it was really only the closing act of the corruption which had existed for centuries, by virtue of which that aristocracy had abdicated step by step its lordly prerogatives and lowered itself to a function of royalty (in the end even to its decoration and parade-dress). The essential thing, however, in a good and healthy aristocracy is that it should not regard itself as a function either of the kingship or the commonwealth, but as the significance highest justification thereof—that it should therefore accept with a good conscience the sacrifice of a legion of individuals, who, for its sake, must be suppressed and reduced to imperfect men, to slaves and instruments. Its

fundamental belief must be precisely that society is not allowed to exist for its own sake, but only as a foundation and scaffolding, by means of which a select class of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their higher duties, and in general to a higher existence: like those sun-seeking climbing plants in Java—they are called Sipo Matador,—which encircle an oak so long and so often with their arms, until at last, high above it, but supported by it, they can unfold their tops in the open light, and exhibit their happiness.

[Life Denial]

259. To refrain mutually from injury, from violence, from exploitation, and put one's will on a par with that of others: this may result in a certain rough sense in good conduct among individuals when the necessary conditions are given (namely, the actual similarity of the individuals in amount of force and degree of worth, and their co-relation within one organization). As soon, however, as one wished to take this principle more generally, and if possible even as the fundamental principle of society, it would immediately disclose what it really is—namely, a Will to the denial of life, a principle of dissolution and decay.

Here one must think profoundly to the very basis and resist all sentimental weakness: life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of peculiar forms, incorporation, and at the least, putting it mildest, exploitation;—but why should one for ever use precisely these words on which for ages a disparaging purpose has been stamped?

Even the organization within which, as was previously supposed, the individuals treat each other as equal—it takes place in every healthy aristocracy—must itself, if it be a living and not a dying organization, do all that towards other bodies, which the individuals within it refrain from doing to each other it will have to be the incarnated Will to Power, it will endeavor to grow, to gain ground, attract to itself and acquire ascendancy—not owing to any morality or immorality, but because it lives, and because life is precisely Will to Power. On no point, however, is the ordinary consciousness of Europeans more unwilling to be corrected than on this matter, people now rave everywhere, even under the guise of science, about coming conditions of society in which “the exploiting character” is to be absent—that sounds to my ears as if they promised to invent a mode of life which should refrain from all organic functions.

“Exploitation” does not belong to a depraved, or imperfect and primitive society it belongs to the nature of the living being as a primary organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic Will to Power, which is precisely the Will to Life—Granting that as a theory this is a novelty—as a reality it is the fundamental fact of all history let us be so

far honest towards ourselves!

[Master Morality]

260. In a tour through the many finer and coarser moralities which have hitherto prevailed or still prevail on the earth, I found certain traits recurring regularly together, and connected with one another, until finally two primary types revealed themselves to me, and a radical distinction was brought to light.

There is master-morality and slave-morality,—I would at once add, however, that in all higher and mixed civilizations, there are also attempts at the reconciliation of the two moralities, but one finds still oftener the confusion and mutual misunderstanding of them, indeed sometimes their close juxtaposition—even in the same man, within one soul. The distinctions of moral values have either originated in a ruling caste, pleasantly conscious of being different from the ruled—or among the ruled class, the slaves and dependents of all sorts.

In the first case, when it is the rulers who determine the conception “good,” it is the exalted, proud disposition which is regarded as the distinguishing feature, and that which determines the order of rank. The noble type of man separates from himself the beings in whom the opposite of this exalted, proud disposition displays itself he despises them. Let it at once be noted that in this first kind of morality the antithesis “good” and “bad” means practically the same as “noble” and “despicable”,—the antithesis “good” and “evil” is of a different origin. The cowardly, the timid, the insignificant, and those thinking merely of narrow utility are despised; moreover, also, the distrustful, with their constrained glances, the self-abasing, the dog-like kind of men who let themselves be abused, the mendicant flatterers, and above all the liars:—it is a fundamental belief of all aristocrats that the common people are untruthful. “We truthful ones”—the nobility in ancient Greece called themselves.

It is obvious that everywhere the designations of moral value were at first applied to men; and were only derivatively and at a later period applied to actions; it is a gross mistake, therefore, when historians of morals start with questions like, “Why have sympathetic actions been praised?” The noble type of man regards himself as a determiner of values; he does not require to be approved of; he passes the judgment: What is injurious to me is injurious in itself; he knows that it is he himself only who confers honor on things; he is a creator of values. He honors whatever he recognizes in himself: such morality equals self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of plenitude, of power, which seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of a wealth which would fain give and bestow:—the noble man also helps the unfortunate, but not—or scarcely—out of

pity, but rather from an impulse generated by the superabundance of power. The noble man honors in himself the powerful one, him also who has power over himself, who knows how to speak and how to keep silence, who takes pleasure in subjecting himself to severity and hardness, and has reverence for all that is severe and hard. “Wotan placed a hard heart in my breast,” says an old Scandinavian Saga: it is thus rightly expressed from the soul of a proud Viking. Such a type of man is even proud of not being made for sympathy; the hero of the Saga therefore adds warningly: “He who has not a hard heart when young, will never have one.” The noble and brave who think thus are the furthest removed from the morality which sees precisely in sympathy, or in acting for the good of others, or in *dèintèressement*, the characteristic of the moral; faith in oneself, pride in oneself, a radical enmity and irony towards “selflessness,” belong as definitely to noble morality, as do a careless scorn and precaution in presence of sympathy and the “warm heart.”

It is the powerful who know how to honor, it is their art, their domain for invention. The profound reverence for age and for tradition—all law rests on this double reverence,— the belief and prejudice in favor of ancestors and unfavorable to newcomers, is typical in the morality of the powerful; and if, reversely, men of “modern ideas” believe almost instinctively in “progress” and the “future,” and are more and more lacking in respect for old age, the ignoble origin of these “ideas” has complacently betrayed itself thereby.

A morality of the ruling class, however, is more especially foreign and irritating to present-day taste in the sternness of its principle that one has duties only to one’s equals; that one may act towards beings of a lower rank, towards all that is foreign, just as seems good to one, or “as the heart desires,” and in any case “beyond good and evil”: it is here that sympathy and similar sentiments can have a place. The ability and obligation to exercise prolonged gratitude and prolonged revenge—both only within the circle of equals,—artfulness in retaliation, refinement of the idea in friendship, a certain necessity to have enemies (as outlets for the emotions of envy, quarrelsomeness, arrogance—in fact, in order to be a good friend): all these are typical characteristics of the noble morality, which, as has been pointed out, is not the morality of “modern ideas,” and is therefore at present difficult to realize, and also to unearth and disclose.

[Slave Morality]

It is otherwise with the second type of morality, slave-morality. Supposing that the abused, the oppressed, the suffering, the unemancipated, the weary, and those uncertain of themselves should moralize, what will be the common element in their moral estimates? Probably a pessimistic suspicion with regard to the entire situation of man will find expression, perhaps a condemnation of man, together with his situation. The slave

has an unfavorable eye for the virtues of the powerful; he has a skepticism and distrust, a refinement of distrust of everything “good” that is there honored—he would fain persuade himself that the very happiness there is not genuine. On the other hand, those qualities which serve to alleviate the existence of sufferers are brought into prominence and flooded with light; it is here that sympathy, the kind, helping hand, the warm heart, patience, diligence, humility, and friendliness attain to honor; for here these are the most useful qualities, and almost the only means of supporting the burden of existence. Slave-morality is essentially the morality of utility.

Here is the seat of the origin of the famous antithesis “good” and “evil”:—power and dangerousness are assumed to reside in the evil, a certain dreadfulness, subtlety, and strength, which do not admit of being despised. According to slave-morality, therefore, the “evil” man arouses fear; according to master-morality, it is precisely the “good” man who arouses fear and seeks to arouse it, while the bad man is regarded as the despicable being.

The contrast attains its maximum when, in accordance with the logical consequences of slave-morality, a shade of depreciation—it may be slight and well-intentioned—at last attaches itself to the “good” man of this morality; because, according to the servile mode of thought, the good man must in any case be the safe man: he is good-natured, easily deceived, perhaps a little stupid, un bonhomme. Everywhere that slave-morality gains the ascendancy, language shows a tendency to approximate the significations of the words “good” and “stupid.”

[Creation of Values]

A last fundamental difference: the desire for freedom, the instinct for happiness and the refinements of the feeling of liberty belong as necessarily to slave-morals and morality, as artifice and enthusiasm in reverence and

devotion are the regular symptoms of an aristocratic mode of thinking and estimating.—Hence we can understand without further detail why love as a passion—it is our European specialty—must absolutely be of noble origin; as is well known, its invention is due to the Provençal poet-cavaliers, those brilliant, ingenious men of the “gai saber,” to whom Europe owes so much, and almost owes itself.

261. Vanity is one of the things which are perhaps most difficult for a noble man to understand: he will be tempted to deny it, where another kind of man thinks he sees it self-evidently. The problem for him is to represent to his mind beings who seek to arouse a good opinion of themselves which they themselves do not possess—and consequently

also do not “deserve,”—and who yet believe in this good opinion afterwards. This seems to him on the one hand such bad taste and so self-disrespectful, and on the other hand so grotesquely unreasonable, that he would like to consider vanity an exception, and is doubtful about it in most cases when it is spoken of.

He will say, for instance: “I may be mistaken about my value, and on the other hand may nevertheless demand that my value should be acknowledged by others precisely as I rate it:—that, however, is not vanity (but self-conceit, or, in most cases, that which is called ‘humility,’ and also ‘modesty’).” Or he will even say: “For many reasons I can delight in the good opinion of others, perhaps because I love and honor them, and rejoice in all their joys, perhaps also because their good opinion endorses and strengthens my belief in my own good opinion, perhaps because the good opinion of others, even in cases where I do not share it, is useful to me, or gives promise of usefulness:—all this, however, is not vanity.”

The man of noble character must first bring it home forcibly to his mind, especially with the aid of history, that, from time immemorial, in all social strata in any way dependent, the ordinary man was only that which he passed for:—not being at all accustomed to fix values, he did not assign even to himself any other value than that which his master assigned to him (it is the peculiar right of masters to create values).

It may be looked upon as the result of an extraordinary atavism, that the ordinary man, even at present, is still always waiting for an opinion about himself, and then instinctively submitting himself to it; yet by no means only to a “good” opinion, but also to a bad and unjust one (think, for instance, of the greater part of the self-appreciations and self-depreciations which believing women learn from their confessors, and which in general the believing Christian learns from his Church).

In fact, conformably to the slow rise of the democratic social order (and its cause, the blending of the blood of masters and slaves), the originally noble and rare impulse of the masters to assign a value to themselves and to “think well” of themselves, will now be more and more encouraged and extended; but it has at all times an older, ampler, and more radically ingrained propensity opposed to it—and in the phenomenon of “vanity” this older propensity overmasters the younger. The vain person rejoices over every good opinion which he hears about himself (quite apart from the point of view of its usefulness, and equally regardless of its truth or falsehood), just as he suffers from every bad opinion: for he subjects himself to both, he feels himself subjected to both, by that oldest instinct of subjection which breaks forth in him.

It is “the slave” in the vain man’s blood, the remains of the slave’s craftiness—and how

much of the “slave” is still left in woman, for instance!—which seeks to seduce to good opinions of itself; it is the slave, too, who immediately afterwards falls prostrate himself before these opinions, as though he had not called them forth.—And to repeat it again: vanity is an atavism.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Archie and Archie, *Reading for Philosophical Inquiry: A Brief Introduction to Philosophical Thinking*.

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On the Euthyphro Dilemma – Plato

Introduction

The following is a duologue between Plato’s mentor and teacher, Socrates and Euthyphro, considered to be the most pious (religious) person in all of Athens. Socrates questions him on whether it is possible for morality to be rooted in religion, here described as those things “which [all] the gods love.”

But the question at the heart of this readings is “**Why do the gods love what they love?**” If the gods love what they love because he thing is worthy of being loved, then the gods are merely following a higher rationale than their own choices. On the other hand, if they love whatever they happen to choose to love, then there is no rhyme or reason to what’s moral.

Reading

Euthyphro: What strange thing has happened, Socrates, that you have left your accustomed haunts in the Lyceum and are now haunting the portico where the king archon sits? For it cannot be that you have an action before the king, as I have.

Socrates: Our Athenians, Euthyphro, do not call it an action, but an indictment.

Euthyphro: What? Somebody has, it seems, brought an indictment against you; for I don't accuse you of having brought one against anyone else.

Socrates: Certainly not.

Euthyphro: But someone else against you?

Socrates: Quite so.

Euthyphro: Who is he?

Socrates: I don't know the man very well myself, Euthyphro, for he seems to be a young and unknown person. His name, however, is Meletus, I believe. And he is of the deme of Pitthus, if you remember any Pitthian Meletus, with long hair and only a little beard, but with a hooked nose.

Euthyphro: I don't remember him, Socrates. But what sort of an indictment has he brought against you?

Socrates: What sort? No mean one, it seems to me; for the fact that, young as he is, he has apprehended so important a matter reflects no small credit upon him. For he says he knows how the youth are corrupted and who those are who corrupt them. He must be a wise man; who, seeing my lack of wisdom and that I am corrupting his fellows, comes to the State, as a boy runs to his mother, to accuse me. And he seems to me to be the only one of the public men who begins in the right way; for the right way is to take care of the young men first, to make them as good as possible, just as a good husbandman will naturally take care of the young plants first and afterwards of the rest.

And so Meletus, perhaps, is first clearing away us who corrupt the young plants, as he says; then after this, when he has turned his attention to the older men, he will bring countless most precious blessings upon the State,—at least, that is the natural outcome of the beginning he has made.

Euthyphro: I hope it may be so, Socrates; but I fear the opposite may result. For it seems to me that he begins by injuring the State at its very heart, when he undertakes to harm you. Now tell me, what does he say you do that corrupts the young?

Socrates: Absurd things, my friend, at first hearing. For he says I am a maker of gods; and because I make new gods and do not believe in the old ones, he indicted me for the sake of these old ones, as he says.

Euthyphro: I understand, Socrates; it is because you say the divine monitor keeps coming to you. So he has brought the indictment against you for making innovations in

religion, and he is going into court to slander you, knowing that slanders on such subjects are readily accepted by the people.

Why, they even laugh at me and say I am crazy when I say anything in the assembly about divine things and foretell the future to them.

And yet there is not one of the things I have foretold that is not true; but they are jealous of all such men as you and I are. However, we must not be disturbed, but must come to close quarters with them.

Socrates: My dear Euthyphro, their ridicule is perhaps of no consequence. For the Athenians, I fancy, are not much concerned, if they think a man is clever, provided he does not impart his clever notions to others; but when they think he makes others to be like himself, they are angry with him, either through jealousy, as you say, or for some other reason.

Euthyphro: I don't much desire to test their sentiments toward me in this matter.

Socrates: No, for perhaps they think that you are reserved and unwilling to impart your wisdom. But I fear that because of my love of men they think that I not only pour myself out copiously to anyone and everyone without payment, but that I would even pay something myself, if anyone would listen to me. Now if, as I was saying just now, they were to laugh at me, as you say they do at you, it would not be at all unpleasant to pass the time in the court with jests and laughter; but if they are in earnest, then only soothsayers like you can tell how this will end.

Euthyphro: Well, Socrates, perhaps it won't amount to much, and you will bring your case to a satisfactory ending, as I think I shall mine.

Socrates: What is your case, Euthyphro? Are you defending or prosecuting?

Euthyphro: Prosecuting.

Socrates: Whom?

Euthyphro: Such a man that they think I am insane because I am prosecuting him.

Socrates: Why? Are you prosecuting one who has wings to fly away with?

Euthyphro: No flying for him at his ripe old age.

Socrates: Who is he?

Euthyphro: My father.

Socrates: Your father, my dear man?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: But what is the charge, and what is the suit about?

Euthyphro: Murder, Socrates.

Socrates : Heracles! Surely, Euthyphro, most people do not know where the right lies; for I fancy it is not everyone who can rightly do what you are doing, but only one who is already very far advanced in wisdom.

Euthyphro: Very far, indeed, Socrates, by Zeus.

Socrates: Is the one who was killed by your father a relative? But of course he was; for you would not bring a charge of murder against him on a stranger's account.

Euthyphro: It is ridiculous, Socrates, that you think it matters whether the man who was killed was a stranger or a relative, and do not see that the only thing to consider is whether the action of the slayer was justified or not, and that if it was justified one ought to let him alone, and if not, one ought to proceed against him, even if he share one's hearth and eat at one's table.

For the pollution is the same if you associate knowingly with such a man and do not purify yourself and him by proceeding against him. In this case, the man who was killed was a hired workman of mine, and when we were farming at Naxos, he was working there on our land.

Now he got drunk, got angry with one of our house slaves, and butchered him. So my father bound him hand and foot, threw him into a ditch, and sent a man here to Athens to ask the religious adviser what he ought to do.

In the meantime he paid no attention to the man as he lay there bound, and neglected him, thinking that he was a murderer and it did not matter if he were to die. And that is just what happened to him. For he died of hunger and cold and his bonds before the messenger came back from the adviser.

Now my father and the rest of my relatives are angry with me, because for the sake of this murderer I am prosecuting my father for murder. For they say he did not kill him, and if he had killed him never so much, yet since the dead man was a murderer, I ought not to trouble myself about such a fellow, because it is unholy for a son to prosecute his father for murder. Which shows how little they know

what the divine law is in regard to holiness and unholiness.

Socrates: But, in the name of Zeus, Euthyphro, do you think your knowledge about divine laws and holiness and unholiness is so exact that, when the facts are as you say, you are not afraid of doing something unholy yourself in prosecuting your father for murder?

Euthyphro: I should be of no use, Socrates, and Euthyphro would be in no way different from other men, if I did not have exact knowledge about all such things.

Socrates: Then the best thing for me, my admirable Euthyphro, is to become your pupil and, before the suit with Meletus comes on, to challenge him and say that I always thought it very important before to know about divine matters and that now, since he says I am doing wrong by acting carelessly and making innovations in matters of religion, I have become your pupil.

And “Meletus,” I should say, “if you acknowledge that Euthyphro is wise in such matters, then believe that I also hold correct opinions, and do not bring me to trial; and if you do not acknowledge that, then bring a suit against him, my teacher, rather than against me, and charge him with corrupting the old, namely, his father and me, which he does by teaching me and by correcting and punishing his father.”

And if he does not do as I ask and does not release me from the indictment or bring it against you in my stead, I could say in the court the same things I said in my challenge to him, could I not?

Euthyphro: By Zeus, Socrates, if he should undertake to indict me, I fancy I should find his weak spot, and it would be much more a question about him in court than about me.

Socrates: And I, my dear friend, perceiving this, wish to become your pupil; for I know that neither this fellow Meletus, nor anyone else, seems to notice you at all, but he has seen through me so sharply and so easily that he has indicted me for impiety.

Now in the name of Zeus, tell me what you just now asserted that you knew so well.

What do you say is the nature of piety and impiety, both in relation to murder and to other things?

Is not holiness always the same with itself in every action and, on the other hand, is not unholiness the opposite of all holiness, always the same with itself and

whatever is to be unholy possessing some one characteristic quality?

Euthyphro: Certainly, Socrates.

Socrates: Tell me then, what do you say holiness is, and what unholiness?

Euthyphro: Well then, I say that holiness is doing what I am doing now, prosecuting the wrongdoer who commits murder or steals from the temples or does any such thing, whether he be your father, or your mother or anyone else, and not prosecuting him is unholy.

And, Socrates, see what a sure proof I offer you,—a proof I have already given to others,—that this is established and right and that we ought not to let him who acts impiously go unpunished, no matter who he may be.

Men believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, and they acknowledge that he put his father in bonds because he wickedly devoured his children, and he in turn had mutilated his father for similar reasons; but they are incensed against me because I proceed against my father when he has done wrong, and so they are inconsistent in what they say about the gods and about me.

Socrates: Is not this, Euthyphro, the reason why I am being prosecuted, because when people tell such stories about the gods I find it hard to accept them? And therefore, probably, people will say I am wrong.

Now if you, who know so much about such things, accept these tales, I suppose I too must give way. For what am I to say, who confess frankly that I know nothing about them?

But tell me, in the name of Zeus, the god of friendship, do you really believe these things happened?

Euthyphro: Yes, and still more wonderful things than these, Socrates, which most people do not know.

Socrates: And so you believe that there was really war between the gods, and fearful enmities and battles and other things of the sort, such as are told of by the poets and represented in varied designs by the great artists in our sacred places and especially on the robe which is carried up to the Acropolis at the great Panathenaea? for this is covered with such representations. Shall we agree that these things are true, Euthyphro?

Euthyphro: Not only these things, Socrates; but, as I said just now, I will, if you like, tell you many other things about the gods, which I am sure will amaze you when you

hear them.

Socrates: I dare say. But you can tell me those things at your leisure some other time. At present try to tell more clearly what I asked you just now. For, my friend, you did not give me sufficient information before, when I asked what holiness was, but you told me that this was holy which you are now doing, prosecuting your father for murder.

Euthyphro: Well, what I said was true, Socrates.

Socrates: Perhaps. But, Euthyphro, you say that many other things are holy, do you not?

Euthyphro: Why, so they are.

Socrates: Now call to mind that this is not what I asked you, to tell me one or two of the many holy acts, but to tell the essential aspect, by which all holy acts are holy; for you said that all unholy acts were unholy and all holy ones holy by one aspect. Or don't you remember?

Euthyphro: I remember.

Socrates: Tell me then what this aspect is, that I may keep my eye fixed upon it and employ it as a model and, if anything you or anyone else does agrees with it, may say that the act is holy, and if not, that it is unholy.

Euthyphro: If you wish me to explain in that way, I will do so.

Socrates: I do wish it.

Euthyphro: Well then, what is dear to the gods is holy, and what is not dear to them is unholy.

Socrates: Excellent, Euthyphro, now you have answered as I asked you to answer. However, whether it is true, I am not yet sure; but you will, of course, show that what you say is true.

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: Come then, let us examine our words. The thing and the person that are dear to the gods are holy, and the thing and the person that are hateful to the gods are unholy; and the two are not the same, but the holy and the unholy are the exact opposites of each other. Is not this what we have said?

Euthyphro: Yes, just this.

Socrates: And it seems to be correct?

Euthyphro: I think so, Socrates.

Socrates: Well then, have we said this also, that the gods, Euthyphro, quarrel and disagree with each other, and that there is enmity between them?

Euthyphro: Yes, we have said that.

Socrates: But what things is the disagreement about, which causes enmity and anger? Let us look at it in this way. If you and I were to disagree about number, for instance, which of two numbers were the greater, would the disagreement about these matters make us enemies and make us angry with each other, or should we not quickly settle it by resorting to arithmetic?

Euthyphro: Of course we should.

Socrates: Then, too, if we were to disagree about the relative size of things, we should quickly put an end to the disagreement by measuring?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: And we should, I suppose, come to terms about relative weights by weighing?

Euthyphro: Of course.

Socrates: But about what would a disagreement be, which we could not settle and which would cause us to be enemies and be angry with each other? Perhaps you cannot give an answer offhand; [7d] but let me suggest it. Is it not about right and wrong, and noble and disgraceful, and good and bad? Are not these the questions about which you and I and other people become enemies, when we do become enemies, because we differ about them and cannot reach any satisfactory agreement?

Euthyphro: Yes, Socrates, these are the questions about which we should become enemies.

Socrates: And how about the gods, Euthyphro, if they disagree, would they not disagree about these questions?

Euthyphro: Necessarily.

Socrates: Then, my noble Euthyphro, according to what you say, some of the gods too think some things are right or wrong and noble or disgraceful, and good or bad, and others disagree; for they would not quarrel with each other if they did not disagree about these matters. Is that the case?

Euthyphro: You are right.

Socrates: Then the gods in each group love the things which they consider good and right and hate the opposites of these things?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: But you say that the same things are considered right by some of them and wrong by others; and it is because they disagree about these things [8a] that they quarrel and wage war with each other. Is not this what you said?

Euthyphro: It is.

Socrates: Then, as it seems, the same things are hated and loved by the gods, and the same things would be dear and hateful to the gods.

Euthyphro: So it seems.

Socrates: And then the same things would be both holy and unholy, Euthyphro, according to this statement.

Euthyphro: I suppose so.

Socrates: Then you did not answer my question, my friend. For I did not ask you what is at once holy and unholy; but, judging from your reply, what is dear to the gods is also hateful to the gods. And so, Euthyphro, it would not be surprising if, in punishing your father as you are doing, you were performing an act that is pleasing to Zeus, but hateful to Cronus and Uranus, and pleasing to Hephaestus, but hateful to Hera, and so forth in respect to the other gods, if any disagree with any other about it.

Euthyphro: But I think, Socrates, that none of the gods disagrees with any other about this, or holds that he who kills anyone wrongfully ought not to pay the penalty.

Socrates: Well, Euthyphro, to return to men, did you ever hear anybody arguing that he who had killed anyone wrongfully, or had done anything else whatever wrongfully, ought not to pay the penalty?

Euthyphro: Why, they are always arguing these points, especially in the law courts. For they do very many wrong things; and then there is nothing they will not do or say, in defending themselves, to avoid the penalty.

Socrates: Yes, but do they acknowledge, Euthyphro, that they have done wrong and, although they acknowledge it, nevertheless say that they ought not to pay the

penalty?

Euthyphro: Oh, no, they don't do that.

Socrates: Then there is something they do not do and say. For they do not, I fancy, dare to say and argue that, if they have really done wrong, they ought not to pay the penalty; but, I think, they say they have not done wrong; do they not?

Euthyphro: You are right.

Socrates: Then they do not argue this point, that the wrongdoer must not pay the penalty; but perhaps they argue about this, who is a wrongdoer, and what he did, and when.

Euthyphro: That is true.

Socrates: Then is not the same thing true of the gods, if they quarrel about right and wrong, as you say, and some say others have done wrong, and some say they have not? For surely, my friend, no one, either of gods or men, has the face to say that he who does wrong ought not to pay the penalty.

Euthyphro: Yes, you are right about this, Socrates, in the main.

Socrates: But I think, Euthyphro, those who dispute, both men and gods, if the gods do dispute, dispute about each separate act. When they differ with one another about any act, some say it was right and others that it was wrong. Is it not so?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: Come now, my dear Euthyphro, inform me, that I may be made wiser, what proof you have that all the gods think that the man lost his life wrongfully, who, when he was a servant, committed murder, was bound by the master of the man he killed, and died as a result of his bonds before the master who had bound him found out from the advisers what he ought to do with him, and that it is right on account of such a man for a son to proceed against his father and accuse him of murder. Come, try to show me clearly about this, that [9b] the gods surely believe that this conduct is right; and if you show it to my satisfaction, I will glorify your wisdom as long as I live.

Euthyphro: But perhaps this is no small task, Socrates; though I could show you quite clearly.

Socrates: I understand; it is because you think I am slower to understand than the judges; since it is plain that you will show them that such acts are wrong and that all the

gods hate them.

Euthyphro: Quite clearly, Socrates; that is, if they listen to me.

Socrates: They will listen, if they find that you are a good speaker. [9c] But this occurred to me while you were talking, and I said to myself: "If Euthyphro should prove to me no matter how clearly that all the gods think such a death is wrongful, what have I learned from Euthyphro about the question, what is holiness and what is unholiness? For this act would, as it seems, be hateful to the gods; but we saw just now that holiness and its opposite are not defined in this way; for we saw that what is hateful to the gods is also dear to them; and so I let you off any discussion of this point, Euthyphro. If you like, all the gods may think it wrong and may hate it. But shall we now emend our definition and say that whatever all the gods hate is unholy and whatever they all love is holy, and what some love and others hate is neither or both? Do you wish this now to be our definition of holiness and unholiness?"

Euthyphro: What is to hinder, Socrates?

Socrates: Nothing, so far as I am concerned, Euthyphro, but consider your own position, whether by adopting this definition you will most easily teach me what you promised. [9e]

Euthyphro: Well, I should say that what all the gods love is holy and, on the other hand, what they all hate is unholy.

Socrates: Then shall we examine this again, Euthyphro, to see if it is correct, or shall we let it go and accept our own statement, and those of others, agreeing that it is so, if anyone merely says that it is? Or ought we to inquire into the correctness of the statement?

Euthyphro: We ought to inquire. However, I think this is now correct.

Socrates: We shall soon know more about this, my friend. Just consider this question:—**Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?**

Euthyphro: I don't know what you mean, Socrates.

Socrates: Then I will try to speak more clearly. We speak of being carried and of carrying, of being led and of leading, of being seen and of seeing; and you understand—do you not?—that in all such expressions the two parts differ one from the other in meaning, and how they differ.

Euthyphro: I think I understand.

Socrates: Then, too, we conceive of a thing being loved and of a thing loving, and the two are different?

Euthyphro: Of course. Socrates. Now tell me, is a thing which is carried a carried thing because one carries it, or for some other reason?

Euthyphro: No, for that reason.

Socrates: And a thing which is led --is it led because one leads it, and a thing which is seen is so because one sees it?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: Then one does not see it because its a seen thing, but, on the contrary, it is a seen thing because one sees it; and one does not lead it because it is a led thing, but it is a led thing because one leads it; and one does not carry it because it is a carried thing, but it is a carried thing because one carries it.

Is it clear, Euthyphro, what I am trying to say? I am trying to say this, that if anything becomes or undergoes, it does not become because it is in a state of becoming, but it is in a state of becoming because it becomes, and it does not undergo because it is a thing which undergoes, but because it undergoes it is a thing which undergoes; or do you not agree to this?

Euthyphro: I agree.

Socrates: Is not that which is beloved a thing which is either becoming or undergoing something?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: And is this case like the former ones: those who love it do not love it because it is a bad thing, but it is a beloved thing because they love it?

Euthyphro: Obviously.

Socrates: Now what do you say about that which is holy, Euthyphro, it is loved by all the gods, is it not, according to what you said?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: For this reason, because it is holy, or for some other reason?

Euthyphro: No, for this reason.

Socrates: It is loved because it is holy, not holy because it is loved?

Euthyphro: I think so.

Socrates: But that which is dear to the gods is dear to them and beloved by them because they love it.

Euthyphro: Of course.

Socrates: Then that which is dear to the gods and that which is holy are not identical, but differ one from the other.

Euthyphro: How so, Socrates?

Socrates: Because we are agreed that the holy is loved because it is holy and that it is not holy because it is loved; are we not?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: But we are agreed that what is dear to the gods is dear to them because they love it, that is, by reason of this love, not that they love it because it is dear.

Euthyphro: Very true.

Socrates: But if that which is dear to the gods and that which is holy were identical, my dear Euthyphro, then if the holy were loved because it is holy, that which is dear to the gods would be loved because it is dear, and if that which is dear to the gods is dear because it is loved, then that which is holy would be holy because it is loved; but now you see that the opposite is the case, showing that the two are different from each other.

For the one becomes lovable from the fact that it is loved, whereas the other is loved because it is in itself lovable.

And, Euthyphro, it seems that when you were asked what holiness is, you were unwilling to make plain its essence, but you mentioned something that has happened to this holiness, namely, that it is loved by the gods. But you did not tell as yet what it really is.

So, if you please, do not hide it from me, but begin over again and tell me what holiness is, no matter whether it is loved by the gods or anything else happens it; for we shall not quarrel about that. But tell me frankly, What is holiness, and what

is unholiness?

Euthyphro: But, Socrates, I do not know how to say what I mean. For whatever statement we advance, somehow or other it moves about and won't stay where we put it.

Socrates: Your statements, Euthyphro, are like works of my² ancestor Daedalus, and if I were the one who made or advanced them, you might laugh at me and say that on account of my relationship to him my works in words run away and won't stay where they are put. But now—well, the statements are yours; so some other jest is demanded; for they stay fixed, as you yourself see.

Euthyphro: I think the jest does very well as it is; for I am not the one who makes these statements move about and not stay in the same place, but you are the Daedalus; for they would have stayed, so far as I am concerned.

Socrates: Apparently then, my friend, I am a more clever artist than Daedalus, inasmuch as he made only his own works move, whereas I, as it seems, give motion to the works of others as well as to my own. And the most exquisite thing about my art is that I am clever against my will; for I would rather have my words stay fixed and stable than possess the wisdom of Daedalus and the wealth of Tantalus besides. But enough of this. Since you seem to be indolent, I will aid you myself, so that you may instruct me about holiness. And do not give it up beforehand. Just see whether you do not think that everything that is holy is right.

Euthyphro: I do.

Socrates: But is everything that is right also holy? Or is all which is holy right, and not all which is right holy, but part of it holy and part something else?

Euthyphro: I can't follow you, Socrates.

Socrates: And yet you are as much younger than I as you are wiser; but, as I said, you are indolent on account of your wealth of wisdom. But exert yourself, my friend; for it is not hard to understand what I mean. What I mean is the opposite of what the poet said, who wrote:

“Zeus the creator, him who made all things,
thou wilt not name; for where fear is, there also is reverence.”

-Stasinus, author of the Cypria

Now I disagree with the poet. Shall I tell you how?

Euthyphro: By all means.

Socrates: It does not seem to me true that where fear is, there also is reverence; for many who fear diseases and poverty and other such things seem to me to fear, but not to reverence at all these things which they fear. Don't you think so, too?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: But I think that where reverence is, there also is fear; for does not everyone who has a feeling of reverence and shame about any act also dread and fear the reputation for wickedness?

Euthyphro: Yes, he does fear.

Socrates: Then it is not correct to say, "where fear is, there also is reverence." On the contrary, where reverence is, there also is fear; but reverence is not everywhere where fear is, since, as I think, fear is more comprehensive than reverence; for reverence is a part of fear, just as the odd is a part of number, so that it is not true that where number is, there also is the odd, but that where the odd is, there also is number. Perhaps you follow me now?

Euthyphro: Perfectly.

Socrates: It was something of this sort that I meant before, when I asked whether where the right is, there also is holiness, or where holiness is, there also is the right; but holiness is not everywhere where the right is, for holiness is a part of the right. Do we agree to this, or do you dissent?

Euthyphro: No, I agree; for I think the statement is correct.

Socrates: Now observe the next point. If holiness is a part of the right, we must, apparently, find out what part of the right holiness is. Now if you asked me about one of the things I just mentioned, as, for example, what part of number the even was, and what kind of a number it was I should say, "that which is not indivisible by two, but divisible by two"; or don't you agree?

Euthyphro: I agree. Socrates. Now try in your turn to teach me what part of the right holiness is, that I may tell Meletus not to wrong me any more or bring suits against me for impiety, since I have now been duly instructed by you about what is, and what is not, pious and holy.

Euthyphro: This then is my opinion, Socrates, that the part of the right which has to do with attention to the gods constitutes piety and holiness, and that the remaining part of the right is that which has to do with the service of men.

Socrates: I think you are correct, Euthyphro; [13a] but there is one little point about

which I still want information, for I do not yet understand what you mean by "attention." I don't suppose you mean the same kind of attention to the gods which is paid to other things. We say, for example, that not everyone knows how to attend to horses, but only he who is skilled in horsemanship, do we not?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: Then horsemanship is the art of attending to horses?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: And not everyone knows how to attend to dogs, but only the huntsman?

Euthyphro: That is so.

Socrates: Then the huntsman's art is the art of attending to dogs?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: And the oxherd's art is that of attending to oxen?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: And holiness and piety is the art of attending to the gods? Is that what you mean, Euthyphro?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: Now does attention always aim to accomplish the same end? I mean something like this: It aims at some good or benefit to the one to whom it is given, as you see that horses, when attended to by the horseman's art are benefited and made better; or don't you think so?

Euthyphro: Yes, I do.

Socrates: And dogs are benefited by the huntsman's art and oxen by the oxherd's and everything else in the same way? Or do you think care and attention are ever meant for the injury of that which is cared for?

Euthyphro: No, by Zeus, I do not.

Socrates: But for its benefit?

Euthyphro: Of course.

Socrates: Then holiness, since it is the art of attending to the gods, is a benefit to the gods, and makes them better? And you would agree that when you do a holy or pious act you are making one of the gods better?

Euthyphro: No, by Zeus, not I.

Socrates: Nor do I, Euthyphro, think that is what you meant. Far from it. But I asked what you meant by [13d] “attention to the gods” just because I did not think you meant anything like that.

Euthyphro: You are right, Socrates; that is not what I mean.

Socrates: Well, what kind of attention to the gods is holiness?

Euthyphro: The kind, Socrates, that servants pay to their masters.

Socrates: I understand. It is, you mean, a kind of service to the gods?

Euthyphro: Exactly.

Socrates: Now can you tell me what result the art that serves the physician serves to produce? Is it not health?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: Well then; what is it which the art that serves shipbuilders serves to produce?

Euthyphro: Evidently, Socrates, a ship.

Socrates: And that which serves housebuilders serves to build a house?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: Then tell me, my friend; what would the art which serves the gods serve to accomplish? For it is evident that you know, since you say you know more than any other man about matters which have to do with the gods.

Euthyphro: And what I say is true, Socrates.

Socrates: Then, in the name of Zeus, tell me, what is that glorious result which the gods accomplish by using us as servants?

Euthyphro: They accomplish many fine results, Socrates.

Socrates: Yes, and so do generals, my friend; but nevertheless, you could easily tell the

chief of them, namely, that they bring about victory in war. Is that not the case?

Euthyphro: Of course.

Socrates: And farmers also, I think, accomplish many fine results; but still the chief result of their work is food from the land?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: But how about the many fine results the gods accomplish? What is the chief result of their work?

Euthyphro: I told you a while ago, Socrates, that it is a long task to learn accurately all about these things. However, I say simply that when one knows how to say and do what is gratifying to the gods, in praying and sacrificing, that is holiness, and such things bring salvation to individual families and to states; and the opposite of what is gratifying to the gods is impious, and that overturns and destroys everything.

Socrates: You might, if you wished, Euthyphro, have answered much more briefly the chief part of my question. But it is plain that you do not care to instruct me. [14c] For now, when you were close upon it you turned aside; and if you had answered it, I should already have obtained from you all the instruction I need about holiness. But, as things are, the questioner must follow the one questioned wherever he leads. What do you say the holy, or holiness, is? Do you not say that it is a kind of science of sacrificing and praying?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: And sacrificing is making gifts to the gods and praying is asking from them?

Euthyphro: Exactly, Socrates.

Socrates: Then holiness, according to this definition, would be a science of giving and asking.

Euthyphro: You understand perfectly what I said, Socrates.

Socrates: Yes, my friend, for I am eager for your wisdom, and give my mind to it, so that nothing you say shall fall to the ground. But tell me, what is this service of the gods? Do you say that it consists in asking from them and giving to them?

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: Would not the right way of asking be to ask of them what we need from them?

Euthyphro: What else?

Socrates: And the right way of giving, to present them with what they need from us? For it would not be scientific giving to give anyone what he does not need.

Euthyphro: You are right, Socrates.

Socrates: Then holiness would be an art of barter between gods and men?

Euthyphro: Yes, of barter, if you like to call it so.

Socrates: I don't like to call it so, if it is not true. But tell me, what advantage accrues to the gods from the gifts they get from us? For everybody knows what they give, [15a] since we have nothing good which they do not give. But what advantage do they derive from what they get from us? Or have we so much the better of them in our bartering that we get all good things from them and they nothing from us?

Euthyphro: Why you don't suppose, Socrates, that the gods gain any advantage from what they get from us, do you?

Socrates: Well then, what would those gifts of ours to the gods be?

Euthyphro: What else than honor and praise, and, as I said before, gratitude?

Socrates: Then, Euthyphro, holiness is grateful to the gods, but not advantageous or precious to the gods?

Euthyphro: I think it is precious, above all things.

Socrates: Then again, it seems, holiness is that which is precious to the gods.

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: Then will you be surprised, since you say this, if your words do not remain fixed but walk about, and will you accuse me of being the Daedalus who makes them walk, when you are yourself much more skillful than Daedalus and make them go round in a circle? Or do you not see that our definition has come round to the point from which it started? For you remember, I suppose, that a while ago we found that holiness and what is dear to the gods were not the same, but different from each other; or do you not remember?

Euthyphro: Yes, I remember.

Socrates: Then don't you see that now you say that what is precious to the gods is holy? And is not this what is dear to the gods?

Euthyphro: Certainly.

Socrates: Then either our agreement a while ago was wrong, or if that was right, we are wrong now.

Euthyphro: So it seems.

Socrates: Then we must begin again at the beginning and ask what holiness is. Since I shall not willingly give up until I learn. And do not scorn me, but by all means apply your mind now to the utmost and tell me the truth; for you know, if anyone does, and like Proteus, you must be held until you speak. For if you had not clear knowledge of holiness and unholiness, you would surely not have undertaken to prosecute your aged father for murder for the sake of a servant. You would have been afraid to risk the anger of the gods, in case your conduct should be wrong, and would have been ashamed in the sight of men. But now I am sure you think you know what is holy and what is not. So tell me, most excellent Euthyphro, and do not conceal your thought.

Euthyphro: Some other time, Socrates. Now I am in a hurry and it is time for me to go.

Socrates: Oh my friend, what are you doing? You go away and leave me cast down from the high hope I had that I should learn from you what is holy, and what is not, and should get rid of Meletus's indictment by showing him that I have been made wise by Euthyphro about divine matters and am no longer through ignorance acting carelessly and making innovations in respect to them, and that I shall live a better life henceforth.

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On Natural Law Theory – Thomas Aquinas

Introduction

In this reading, Thomas Aquinas, considered a “Doctor of the Church” in Catholicism, considers a series of objections to the notion of Natural Law theory. He draws upon reasoning itself and his sacred text to demonstrate his replies to each objection.

Aquinas distinguishes between various sorts of laws:

1. **Eternal Law:** the very mind of God, which governs the rationality of the universe and includes the writing of physical and moral laws, this is fundamentally beyond our grasp as we are finite creatures;
2. **Divine Law:** laws derived from the mind of God that apply to humans and communicated via *revelation*;
3. **Natural Law:** the imprint of eternal law on creatures that should govern their actions, they are discoverable through *reason* for humans;
4. **Human Law:** those laws which we make to govern ourselves and our societies, these should be in alignment with natural, divine, and eternal law.

The natural end of each creature determines the contents of its natural law. Dogs have one natural purpose and humans another. Humans are designed to be rational creatures (this is what distinguishes us from other creatures for Aquinas) and so rationality governs us. Accordingly, we can use rationality to discover natural law.

Under Aquinas’ system, and most natural law approaches, all humans have access to reason and so can *discover* and *agree* upon how we should act according to Natural Law. We can also judge Human Law by determining whether it aligns with or contradicts Natural Law.

As you move through this reading, not only try and learn about Aquinas’ view of morality, but also consider *how* he is thinking through possible objections and how to reply to them.

Text

Article 1. Whether there is an eternal law?

Objection 1.

It would seem that there is no eternal law. Because every law is imposed on someone. But there was not someone from eternity on whom a law could be imposed: since God alone

was from eternity. Therefore no law is eternal.

Objection 2.

Further, promulgation is essential to law. But promulgation could not be from eternity: because there was no one to whom it could be promulgated from eternity. Therefore no law can be eternal.

Objection 3.

Further, a law implies order to an end. But nothing ordained to an end is eternal: for the last end alone is eternal. Therefore no law is eternal.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Lib. Arb. i, 6): "That Law which is the Supreme Reason cannot be understood to be otherwise than unchangeable and eternal."

I answer that,

As stated above (I-II:90:1 ad 2; I-II:91:3-4), a law is nothing else but a dictate of practical reason emanating from the ruler who governs a perfect community. Now it is evident, granted that the world is ruled by Divine Providence, as was stated in I:22:1 and I:22:2, that the whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason. Wherefore the very Idea of the government of things in God the Ruler of the universe, has the nature of a law. And since the Divine Reason's conception of things is not subject to time but is eternal, according to Proverbs 8:23, therefore it is that this kind of law must be called eternal.

Reply to Objection 1.

Those things that are not in themselves, exist with God, inasmuch as they are foreknown and preordained by Him, according to Romans 4:17: "Who calls those things that are not, as those that are." Accordingly the eternal concept of the Divine law bears the character of an eternal law, in so far as it is ordained by God to the government of things foreknown by Him.

Reply to Objection 2.

Promulgation is made by word of mouth or in writing; and in both ways the eternal law is promulgated: because both the Divine Word and the writing of the Book of Life are eternal. But the promulgation cannot be from eternity on the part of the creature that hears or reads.

Reply to Objection 3.

The law implies order to the end actively, in so far as it directs certain things to the end; but not passively—that is to say, the law itself is not ordained to the end—except accidentally, in a governor whose end is extrinsic to him, and to which end his law must needs be ordained. But the end of the Divine government is God Himself, and His law is not distinct from Himself. Wherefore the eternal law is not ordained to another end.

Article 2. Whether there is in us a natural law?

Objection 1.

It would seem that there is no natural law in us. Because man is governed sufficiently by the eternal law: for Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i) that "the eternal law is that by which it is right that all things should be most orderly." But nature does not abound in superfluities as neither does she fail in necessities. Therefore no law is natural to man.

Objection 2.

Further, by the law man is directed, in his acts, to the end, as stated above (I-II:90:2). But the directing of human acts to their end is not a function of nature, as is the case in irrational creatures, which act for an end solely by their natural appetite; whereas man acts for an end by his reason and will. Therefore no law is natural to man.

Objection 3.

Further, the more a man is free, the less is he under the law. But man is freer than all the animals, on account of his free-will, with which he is endowed above all other animals. Since therefore other animals are not subject to a natural law, neither is man subject to a natural law.

On the contrary,

A gloss on Romans 2:14: "When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law," comments as follows: "Although they have no written law, yet they have the natural law, whereby each one knows, and is conscious of, what is good and what is evil."

I answer that,

As stated above (I-II:90:1 ad 1), law, being a rule and measure, can be in a person in two ways: in one way, as in him that rules and measures; in another way, as in that which is ruled and measured, since a thing is ruled and measured, in so far as it partakes of the rule or measure. Wherefore, since all things subject to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law, as was stated above (Article 1); it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law. Hence the Psalmist after saying (Psalm 4:6): "Offer up the sacrifice of justice," as though someone asked what the works of justice are, adds: "Many say, Who shows us good things?" in answer to which question he says: "The light of Your countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us": thus implying that the light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light. It is therefore evident that the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law.

Reply to Objection 1.

This argument would hold, if the natural law were something different from the eternal law: whereas it is nothing but a participation thereof, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 2.

Every act of reason and will in us is based on that which is according to nature, as stated above (I-II:10:1): for every act of reasoning is based on principles that are known naturally, and every act of appetite in respect of the means is derived from the natural appetite in respect of the last end. Accordingly the first direction of our acts to their end must needs be in virtue of the natural law.

Reply to Objection 3.

Even irrational animals partake in their own way of the Eternal Reason, just as the rational creature does. But because the rational creature partakes thereof in an intellectual and rational manner, therefore the participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is properly called a law, since a law is something pertaining to reason, as stated above (I-II:90:1). Irrational creatures, however, do not partake thereof in a rational

manner, wherefore there is no participation of the eternal law in them, except by way of similitude.

Article 3. Whether there is a human law?

Objection 1.

It would seem that there is not a human law. For the natural law is a participation of the eternal law, as stated above (Article 2). Now through the eternal law "all things are most orderly," as Augustine states (De Lib. Arb. i, 6). Therefore the natural law suffices for the ordering of all human affairs. Consequently there is no need for a human law.

Objection 2.

Further, a law bears the character of a measure, as stated above (I-II:90:1). But human reason is not a measure of things, but vice versa, as stated in Metaph. x, text. 5. Therefore no law can emanate from human reason.

Objection 3.

Further, a measure should be most certain, as stated in Metaph. x, text. 3. But the dictates of human reason in matters of conduct are uncertain, according to Wisdom 9:14: "The thoughts of mortal men are fearful, and our counsels uncertain." Therefore no law can emanate from human reason.

On the contrary,

Augustine (De Lib. Arb. i, 6) distinguishes two kinds of law, the one eternal, the other temporal, which he calls human.

I answer that,

As stated above (I-II:90:1 ad 2), a law is a dictate of the practical reason. Now it is to be observed that the same procedure takes place in the practical and in the speculative reason: for each proceeds from principles to conclusions, as stated above (De Lib. Arb. i, 6). Accordingly we conclude that just as, in the speculative reason, from naturally known indemonstrable principles, we draw the conclusions of the various sciences, the knowledge of which is not imparted to us by nature, but acquired by the efforts of reason, so too it is from the precepts of the natural law, as from general and indemonstrable principles, that the human reason needs to proceed to the more particular determination

of certain matters.

These particular determinations, devised by human reason, are called human laws, provided the other essential conditions of law be observed, as stated above (I-II:90:2-4). Wherefore Tully says in his Rhetoric (De Invent. Rhet. ii) that "justice has its source in nature; thence certain things came into custom by reason of their utility; afterwards these things which emanated from nature and were approved by custom, were sanctioned by fear and reverence for the law."

Reply to Objection 1.

The human reason cannot have a full participation of the dictate of the Divine Reason, but according to its own mode, and imperfectly. Consequently, as on the part of the speculative reason, by a natural participation of Divine Wisdom, there is in us the knowledge of certain general principles, but not proper knowledge of each single truth, such as that contained in the Divine Wisdom; so too, on the part of the practical reason, man has a natural participation of the eternal law, according to certain general principles, but not as regards the particular determinations of individual cases, which are, however, contained in the eternal law. Hence the need for human reason to proceed further to sanction them by law.

Reply to Objection 2.

Human reason is not, of itself, the rule of things: but the principles impressed on it by nature, are general rules and measures of all things relating to human conduct, whereof the natural reason is the rule and measure, although it is not the measure of things that are from nature.

Reply to Objection 3.

The practical reason is concerned with practical matters, which are singular and contingent: but not with necessary things, with which the speculative reason is concerned. Wherefore human laws cannot have that inerrancy that belongs to the demonstrated conclusions of sciences. Nor is it necessary for every measure to be altogether unerring and certain, but according as it is possible in its own particular genus.

Article 4. Whether there was any need for a Divine law?

Objection 1.

It would seem that there was no need for a Divine law. Because, as stated above (Article 2), the natural law is a participation in us of the eternal law. But the eternal law is a Divine law, as stated above (Article 1). Therefore there was no need for a Divine law in addition to the natural law, and human laws derived therefrom.

Objection 2.

Further, it is written (Sirach 15:14) that "God left man in the hand of his own counsel." Now counsel is an act of reason, as stated above (I-II:14:1). Therefore man was left to the direction of his reason. But a dictate of human reason is a human law as stated above (Article 3). Therefore there is no need for man to be governed also by a Divine law.

Objection 3.

Further, human nature is more self-sufficing than irrational creatures. But irrational creatures have no Divine law besides the natural inclination impressed on them. Much less, therefore, should the rational creature have a Divine law in addition to the natural law.

On the contrary,

David prayed God to set His law before him, saying (Psalm 18:33): "Set before me for a law the way of Your justifications, O Lord."

I answer that,

Besides the natural and the human law it was necessary for the directing of human conduct to have a Divine law. And this for four reasons. First, because it is by law that man is directed how to perform his proper acts in view of his last end. And indeed if man were ordained to no other end than that which is proportionate to his natural faculty, there would be no need for man to have any further direction of the part of his reason, besides the natural law and human law which is derived from it. But since man is ordained to an end of eternal happiness which is in proportionate to man's natural faculty, as stated above (I-II:5:5), therefore it was necessary that, besides the natural and the human law, man should be directed to his end by a law given by God.

Secondly, because, on account of the uncertainty of human judgment, especially on contingent and particular matters, different people form different judgments on human acts; whence also different and contrary laws result. In order, therefore, that man may know without any doubt what he ought to do and what he ought to avoid, it was necessary

for man to be directed in his proper acts by a law given by God, for it is certain that such a law cannot err.

Thirdly, because man can make laws in those matters of which he is competent to judge. But man is not competent to judge of interior movements, that are hidden, but only of exterior acts which appear: and yet for the perfection of virtue it is necessary for man to conduct himself aright in both kinds of acts. Consequently human law could not sufficiently curb and direct interior acts; and it was necessary for this purpose that a Divine law should supervene.

Fourthly, because, as Augustine says (*De Lib. Arb.* i, 5,6), human law cannot punish or forbid all evil deeds: since while aiming at doing away with all evils, it would do away with many good things, and would hinder the advance of the common good, which is necessary for human intercourse. In order, therefore, that no evil might remain unforbidden and unpunished, it was necessary for the Divine law to supervene, whereby all sins are forbidden.

And these four causes are touched upon in Psalm 118:8, where it is said: "The law of the Lord is unspotted," i.e. allowing no foulness of sin; "converting souls," because it directs not only exterior, but also interior acts; "the testimony of the Lord is faithful," because of the certainty of what is true and right; "giving wisdom to little ones," by directing man to an end supernatural and Divine.

Reply to Objection 1.

By the natural law the eternal law is participated proportionately to the capacity of human nature. But to his supernatural end man needs to be directed in a yet higher way. Hence the additional law given by God, whereby man shares more perfectly in the eternal law.

Reply to Objection 2.

Counsel is a kind of inquiry: hence it must proceed from some principles. Nor is it enough for it to proceed from principles imparted by nature, which are the precepts of the natural law, for the reasons given above: but there is need for certain additional principles, namely, the precepts of the Divine law.

Reply to Objection 3.

Irrational creatures are not ordained to an end higher than that which is proportionate to their natural powers: consequently the comparison fails.

Article 5. Whether there is but one Divine law?

Objection 1.

It would seem that there is but one Divine law. Because, where there is one king in one kingdom there is but one law. Now the whole of mankind is compared to God as to one king, according to Psalm 46:8: "God is the King of all the earth." Therefore there is but one Divine law.

Objection 2.

Further, every law is directed to the end which the lawgiver intends for those for whom he makes the law. But God intends one and the same thing for all men; since according to 1 Timothy 2:4: "He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Therefore there is but one Divine law.

Objection 3.

Further, the Divine law seems to be more akin to the eternal law, which is one, than the natural law, according as the revelation of grace is of a higher order than natural knowledge. Therefore much more is the Divine law but one.

On the contrary,

The Apostle says (Hebrews 7:12): "The priesthood being translated, it is necessary that a translation also be made of the law." But the priesthood is twofold, as stated in the same passage, viz. the Levitical priesthood, and the priesthood of Christ. Therefore the Divine law is twofold, namely the Old Law and the New Law.

I answer that,

As stated in the I:30:3, distinction is the cause of number. Now things may be distinguished in two ways. First, as those things that are altogether specifically different, e.g. a horse and an ox. Secondly, as perfect and imperfect in the same species, e.g. a boy and a man: and in this way the Divine law is divided into Old and New. Hence the Apostle (Galatians 3:24-25) compares the state of man under the Old Law to that of a child "under a pedagogue"; but the state under the New Law, to that of a full-grown man, who is "no longer under a pedagogue."

Now the perfection and imperfection of these two laws is to be taken in connection with

the three conditions pertaining to law, as stated above. For, in the first place, it belongs to law to be directed to the common good as to its end, as stated above (I-II:90:2). This good may be twofold. It may be a sensible and earthly good; and to this, man was directly ordained by the Old Law: wherefore, at the very outset of the law, the people were invited to the earthly kingdom of the Chananaeans (Exodus 3:8-17). Again it may be an intelligible and heavenly good: and to this, man is ordained by the New Law. Wherefore, at the very beginning of His preaching, Christ invited men to the kingdom of heaven, saying (Matthew 4:17): "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Hence Augustine says (*Contra Faust.* iv) that "promises of temporal goods are contained in the Old Testament, for which reason it is called old; but the promise of eternal life belongs to the New Testament."

Secondly, it belongs to the law to direct human acts according to the order of righteousness (Article 4): wherein also the New Law surpasses the Old Law, since it directs our internal acts, according to Matthew 5:20: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Hence the saying that "the Old Law restrains the hand, but the New Law controls the mind" (*Sentent.* iii, D, xl).

Thirdly, it belongs to the law to induce men to observe its commandments. This the Old Law did by the fear of punishment: but the New Law, by love, which is poured into our hearts by the grace of Christ, bestowed in the New Law, but foreshadowed in the Old. Hence Augustine says (*Contra Adimant. Manich. discip.* xvii) that "there is little difference [The 'little difference' refers to the Latin words 'timor' and 'amor'—'fear' and 'love.'] between the Law and the Gospel—fear and love."

Reply to Objection 1.

As the father of a family issues different commands to the children and to the adults, so also the one King, God, in His one kingdom, gave one law to men, while they were yet imperfect, and another more perfect law, when, by the preceding law, they had been led to a greater capacity for Divine things.

Reply to Objection 2.

The salvation of man could not be achieved otherwise than through Christ, according to Acts 4:12: "There is no other name . . . given to men, whereby we must be saved." Consequently, the law that brings all to salvation could not be given until after the coming of Christ. But before His coming it was necessary to give to the people, of whom Christ was to be born, a law containing certain rudiments of righteousness unto salvation,

in order to prepare them to receive Him.

Reply to Objection 3.

The natural law directs man by way of certain general precepts, common to both the perfect and the imperfect: wherefore it is one and the same for all. But the Divine law directs man also in certain particular matters, to which the perfect and imperfect do not stand in the same relation. Hence the necessity for the Divine law to be twofold, as already explained.

Article 6. Whether there is a law in the fomes of sin?

Objection 1.

It would seem that there is no law of the "fomes" of sin.²⁴ For Isidore says (Etym. v) that the "law is based on reason." But the "fomes" of sin is not based on reason, but deviates from it. Therefore the "fomes" has not the nature of a law.

Objection 2.

Further, every law is binding, so that those who do not obey it are called transgressors. But man is not called a transgressor, from not following the instigations of the "fomes"; but rather from his following them. Therefore the "fomes" has not the nature of a law.

Objection 3.

Further, the law is ordained to the common good, as stated above (I-II:90:2). But the "fomes" inclines us, not to the common, but to our own private good. Therefore the "fomes" has not the nature of sin.

On the contrary,

The Apostle says (Romans 7:23): "I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind."

I answer that,

²⁴ By "fomes," Aquinas refers to sensuality (as opposed to reason) that leads humans to sin, or act against the natural and divine laws. Fomes outside of Aquinas' usage refers to something that is able to soak up infectious materials.

As stated above (Article 2; I-II:90:1 ad 1), the law, as to its essence, resides in him that rules and measures; but, by way of participation, in that which is ruled and measured; so that every inclination or ordination which may be found in things subject to the law, is called a law by participation, as stated above (Article 2; I-II:90:1 ad 1). Now those who are subject to a law may receive a twofold inclination from the lawgiver. First, in so far as he directly inclines his subjects to something; sometimes indeed different subjects to different acts; in this way we may say that there is a military law and a mercantile law. Secondly, indirectly; thus by the very fact that a lawgiver deprives a subject of some dignity, the latter passes into another order, so as to be under another law, as it were: thus if a soldier be turned out of the army, he becomes a subject of rural or of mercantile legislation.

Accordingly under the Divine Lawgiver various creatures have various natural inclinations, so that what is, as it were, a law for one, is against the law for another: thus I might say that fierceness is, in a way, the law of a dog, but against the law of a sheep or another meek animal. And so **the law of man, which, by the Divine ordinance, is allotted to him, according to his proper natural condition, is that he should act in accordance with reason:** and this law was so effective in the primitive state, that nothing either beside or against reason could take man unawares. But when man turned his back on God, he fell under the influence of his sensual impulses: in fact this happens to each one individually, the more he deviates from the path of reason, so that, after a fashion, he is likened to the beasts that are led by the impulse of sensuality, according to Psalm 48:21: "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand: he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them."

So, then, this very inclination of sensuality which is called the "fomes," in other animals has simply the nature of a law (yet only in so far as a law may be said to be in such things), by reason of a direct inclination. But in man, it has not the nature of law in this way, rather is it a deviation from the law of reason. But since, by the just sentence of God, man is destitute of original justice, and his reason bereft of its vigor, this impulse of sensuality, whereby he is led, in so far as it is a penalty following from the Divine law depriving man of his proper dignity, has the nature of a law.

Reply to Objection 1.

This argument considers the "fomes" in itself, as an incentive to evil. It is not thus that it has the nature of a law, as stated above, but according as it results from the justice of the Divine law: it is as though we were to say that the law allows a nobleman to be condemned to hard labor for some misdeed.

Reply to Objection 2.

This argument considers law in the light of a rule or measure: for it is in this sense that those who deviate from the law become transgressors. But the "fomes" is not a law in this respect, but by a kind of participation, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 3.

This argument considers the "fomes" as to its proper inclination, and not as to its origin. And yet if the inclination of sensuality be considered as it is in other animals, thus it is ordained to the common good, namely, to the preservation of nature in the species or in the individual. And this is in man also, in so far as sensuality is subject to reason. But it is called "fomes" in so far as it strays from the order of reason.

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On Tranquillity – Epicurus

Background

Epicurus suggest that pleasure being the sole end of beings. Morality for each individual must be the art of procuring for oneself the greatest amount of personal pleasure and avoiding as much suffering as possible.²⁵ Epicurus denies that the gods take interest in human affairs and therefore we should not worry about divine moral precepts. Human laws are merely those rules we agree to in order to avoid harm. Morality, for Epicurus, is not following laws or the commands of the gods, but of seeking pleasure and avoiding

²⁵ Felix Alcan, "The Morality of Epicurus and Its Relation to Contemporary Doctrines," in *La Morale d'Epicure et Ses Rapports Avec Les Doctrines Contemporaines*, trans. Mitchell Abidor, 7th Edition (Paris: Kessinger Publishing, LLC), accessed April 3, 2018, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/guyau/1878/epicurus.htm>.

pain.²⁶ But this is not merely haphazard hedonism (pursuit of pleasure). Instead, we must find tranquility (αταραξία, transliteration: ataraxia) in the simple life and discard unnecessary desires.

Text

Epicurus to Menoeceus: Greetings.

Let no one delay to philosophize while he is young nor weary in philosophizing when he is old, for no one is either short of the age or past the age for enjoying health of the soul. And the man who says the time for philosophizing has not yet come or is already past may be compared to the man who says the time for happiness is not yet come or is already gone by. So both the young man and the old man should philosophize, the former that while growing old he may be young in blessings because of gratitude for what has been, the latter that he may be young and old at the same time because of the fearlessness with which he faces the future. Therefore the wise plan is to practice the things that make for happiness, since possessing happiness we have everything and not possessing it we do everything to have it.

The Gods

Both practice and study the precepts which I continuously urged upon you, discerning these to be the A B C's of the good life. First of all, believing the divine being to be blessed and incorruptible, just as the universal idea of it is outlined in our minds, associate nothing with it that is incompatible with incorruption or alien to blessedness. And cultivate every thought concerning it that can preserve its blessedness along with incorruption. Because there are gods, for the knowledge of them is plain to see. They are not, however, such as many suppose them to be, for people do not keep their accounts of them consistent with their beliefs. And it is not the man who would abolish the gods of the multitude who is impious but the man who associates the beliefs of the multitude with the gods; for the pronouncements of the multitude concerning the gods are not innate ideas but false assumptions. According to their stories the greatest injuries and indignities are said to be inflicted upon evil men, and also benefits.

The Gods Indifferent To Wickedness

²⁶ David Konstan, "Epicurus," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/epicurus/>.

[These stories are false, because the gods], being exclusively devoted to virtues that become themselves, feel an affinity for those like themselves and regard all that is not of this kind as alien.

Death

Habituate yourself to the belief that death is nothing to us, because all good and evil lies in consciousness and death is the loss of consciousness. Hence a right understanding of the fact that death is nothing to us renders enjoyable the mortality of life, not by adding infinite time but by taking away the yearning for immortality, for there is nothing to be feared while living by the man who has genuinely grasped the idea that there is nothing to be feared when not living.

So the man is silly who says that he fears death, not because it will pain him when it comes, but because it pains him in prospect; for nothing that occasions no trouble when present has any right to pain us in anticipation. Therefore death, the most frightening of evils, is nothing to us, for the excellent reason that while we live it is not here and when it is here we are not living. So it is nothing either to the living or to the dead, because it is of no concern to the living and the dead are no longer.

The Inconsistency Of People

But the multitude of men at one time shun death as the greatest of evils and at another choose death as an escape from the evils of life. The wise man, however, neither asks quarter of life nor has he any fear of not living, for he has no fault to find with life nor does he think it any evil to be out of it. Just as in the case of food, he does not always choose the largest portion but rather the most enjoyable; so with time, he does not pick the longest span of it but the most enjoyable.

And the one who bids the young man 'Live well' and the old man 'Die well' is simple-minded, not only because of the pleasure of being alive, but also for the reason that the art of living well and dying well is one and the same. And far worse is he who says: 'It were well never to have been born or having been born to have passed with all speed through the gates of Hades.' For if he is saying this out of conviction, why does he not take leave of life? Because this course is open to him if he has resolutely made up his mind to it. But if he is speaking in mockery, he is trifling in the case of things that do not countenance trifling.

The Future

As for the future, we must bear in mind that it is not quite beyond our control nor yet quite within our control, so that we must neither await it as going to be quite within our control nor despair of it as going to be quite beyond our control.

The Desires

As for the desires, we should reflect that some are natural and some are imaginary; and of the natural desires some are necessary and some are natural only; and of the necessary desires some are necessary to happiness [he refers to friendship], and others to the comfort of the body [clothing and housing], and others to life itself [hunger and thirst].

Because a correct appraisal of the desires enables us to refer every decision to choose or to avoid to the test of the health of the body and the tranquility of the soul, for this is the objective of the happy life. For to this end we do everything, that we may feel neither pain nor fear. When once this boon is in our possession, every tumult of the soul is stilled, the creature having nothing to work forward to as something lacking or something additional to seek whereby the good of the soul and the body shall arrive at fullness. For only then have we need of pleasure when from the absence of pleasure we feel pain; and conversely, when we no longer feel pain we no longer feel need of pleasure.

The Beginning And The End Of The Happy Life

And for the following reason we say that pleasure is the beginning and the end of the happy life: because we recognize pleasure as the first good and connate with us and to this we have recourse as to a canon, judging every good by the reaction. And for the reason that pleasure is the first good and of one nature with us we do not choose every pleasure but at one time or another forgo many pleasures when a distress that will outweigh them follows in consequence of these pleasures; and many pains we believe to be preferable to pleasures when a pleasure that will outweigh them ensues for us after enduring those pains for a long time.

Therefore every pleasure is good because it is of one nature with us but every pleasure is not to be chosen; by the same reasoning every pain is an evil but every pain is not such as to be avoided at all times.

Expediency: The Calculus Of Advantage

The right procedure, however, is to weigh them against one another and to scrutinize the advantages and disadvantages; for we treat the good under certain circumstances as an

evil and conversely the evil as a good.

Self-Sufficiency Or Contentment With Little

And self-sufficiency we believe to be a great good, not that we may live on little under all circumstances but that we may be content with little when we do not have plenty, being genuinely convinced that they enjoy luxury most who feel the least need of it; that every natural appetite is easily gratified but the unnatural appetite difficult to gratify; and that plain foods bring a pleasure equal to that of a luxurious diet when all the pain originating in need has been removed; and that bread and water bring the most utter pleasure when one in need of them brings them to his lips.

Thus habituation to simple and inexpensive diets not only contributes to perfect health but also renders a man unshrinking in face of the inevitable emergencies of life; and it disposes us better toward the times of abundance that ensue after intervals of scarcity and renders us fearless in the face of Fortune. When therefore we say that pleasure is the end we do not mean the pleasures of profligates and those that consist in high living, as certain people think, either not understanding us and holding to different views or willfully misrepresenting us; but we mean freedom from pain in the body and turmoil in the soul. For it is not protracted drinking bouts and revels nor yet sexual pleasures with boys and women nor rare dishes of fish and the rest – all the delicacies that the luxurious table bears – that beget the happy life but rather sober calculation, which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and expels the false opinions, the source of most of the turmoil that seizes upon the souls of men.

The Practical Reason

Of all these virtues the source is the practical reason, the greatest good of all – and hence more precious than philosophy itself – teaching us the impossibility of living pleasurably without living according to reason, honor, and justice, and conversely, of living according to reason, honor, and justice without living pleasurably; for the virtues are of one nature with the pleasurable life and conversely, the pleasurable life is inseparable from the virtues.

Description Of The Happy Man

“Because who do you think is in better case than the man who holds pious beliefs concerning the gods and is invariably fearless of death; and has included in his reckoning the end of life as ordained by Nature; and concerning the utmost of things good discerns

this to be easy to enjoy to the full and easy of procurement, while the utmost of things evil is either brief in duration or brief in suffering.

He has abolished the Necessity that is introduced by some thinkers as the mistress of all things, for it were better to subscribe to the myths concerning the gods than to be a slave to the Destiny of the physicists, because the former presumes a hope of mercy through worship but the latter assumes Necessity to be inexorable.

As for Fortune, he does not assume that she is a goddess, as the multitude believes, for nothing is done at random by a god; neither does he think her a fickle cause, for he does not suppose that either good or evil is dealt out to men by her to affect life's happiness; yet he does believe the starting points for great good or evil to originate with her, thinking it better to plan well and fail than to plan badly and succeed, for in the conduct of life it profits more for good judgment to miscarry than for misjudgment to prosper by chance.

Think On These Things

Meditate therefore by day and by night upon these precepts and upon the others that go with these, whether by yourself or in the company of another like yourself, and never will your soul be in turmoil either sleeping or waking but you will be living like a god among men, for in no wise does a man resemble a mortal creature who lives among immortal blessings.

Citation and Use

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On Ethical Egoism – Ayn Rand

From *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand

Introduction

This diatribe in *The Fountainhead* is perhaps the most distilled version of Ayn Rand's Ethical Egoism, which demands that each person pursue their own long-term rational interests alone. Note the two types of people Rand claims exist: the creator and the parasite. In *The Fountainhead*, the architect Howard Roark is on trial for destroying a building of his own design. This is part of a speech in his defense.

Early on, Rand develops a unique riff on humanity's origin myths to carefully construct the moral universe she operates within. Take careful note of both of how her anthropology differs from yours and how her anthropology sets up the rest of her moral theory of selfishness. Rand sees a certain Hobbesian pre-society war of all against all raging in society, but she does not see the government as the Hobbesian Sovereign, but as a minimalistic State whose only role is to keep people from committing violence against one another and protecting private property.

On a similar note to Nietzsche, she addresses her morality to the strong, smart, capable, and powerful in society. She only conceives of differences between the social standings of people in terms of individual choices and denies that systems of power relations shape outcomes (unless it is government-influenced charity or religious selflessness, both of which she sees as harmful to the producers, helpers and the helped). To the rest she only offers a hypothetical chance to strengthen and improve oneself — but with no aid from anyone. This hyper-individualism resonates with a trajectory of part of the American ethos, particularly within the Neoliberal milieu, where the Cosmos and everything within it is conceptualized as nestled markets.

Roark's Courtroom Speech

Thousands of years ago, the first man discovered how to make fire. He was probably burned at the stake he had taught his brothers to light. He was considered an evildoer who had dealt with a demon mankind dreaded. But thereafter men had fire to keep them warm, to cook their food, to light their caves. He had left them a gift they had not conceived and he had lifted darkness off the earth. Centuries later, the first man invented the wheel. He was probably torn on the rack he had taught his brothers to build. He was considered a transgressor who ventured into forbidden territory. But thereafter, men could travel past any horizon. He had left them a gift they had not conceived and he had opened the roads of the world.

That man, the unsubmitive and first, stands in the opening chapter of every legend

mankind has recorded about its beginning.

Prometheus was chained to a rock and torn by vultures—because he had stolen the fire of the gods. Adam was condemned to suffer— because he had eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Whatever the legend, somewhere in the shadows of its memory mankind knew that its glory began with one and that that one paid for his courage.

Throughout the centuries there were men who took first steps down new roads armed with nothing but their own vision. Their goals differed, but they all had this in common: that the step was first, the road new, the vision unborrowed, and the response they received— hatred. The great creators—the thinkers, the artists, the scientists, the inventors—stood alone against the men of their time. Every great new thought was opposed. Every great new invention was denounced. The first motor was considered foolish. The airplane was considered impossible. The power loom was considered vicious. Anesthesia was considered sinful. But the men of unborrowed vision went ahead. They fought, they suffered and they paid. But they won.

No creator was prompted by a desire to serve his brothers, for his brothers rejected the gift he offered and that gift destroyed the slothful routine of their lives. His truth was his only motive. His own truth, and his own work to achieve it in his own way. A symphony, a book, an engine, a philosophy, an airplane or a building—that was his goal and his life. Not those who heard, read, operated, believed, flew or inhabited the thing he had created. The creation, not its users. The creation, not the benefits others derived from it. The creation which gave form to his truth. He held his truth above all things and against all men.

His vision, his strength, his courage came from his own spirit. A man's spirit, however, is his self. That entity which is his consciousness. To think, to feel, to judge, to act are functions of the ego.

The creators were not selfless. It is the whole secret of their power— that it was self-sufficient, self-motivated, self-generated. A first cause, a fount of energy, a life force, a Prime Mover. The creator served nothing and no one. He lived for himself.

And only by living for himself was he able to achieve the things which are the glory of mankind. Such is the nature of achievement.

Man cannot survive except through his mind. He comes on earth unarmed. His brain is his only weapon. Animals obtain food by force. Man has no claws, no fangs, no horns, no great strength of muscle. He must plant his food or hunt it. To plant, he needs a process

of thought. To hunt, he needs weapons, and to make weapons—a process of thought. From this simplest necessity to the highest religious abstraction, from the wheel to the skyscraper, everything we are and everything we have comes from a single attribute of man—the function of his reasoning mind.

But the mind is an attribute of the individual. There is no such thing as a collective brain. There is no such thing as a collective thought. An agreement reached by a group of men is only a compromise or an average drawn upon many individual thoughts. It is a secondary consequence. The primary act—the process of reason—must be performed by each man alone. We can divide a meal among many men. We cannot digest it in a collective stomach. No man can use his lungs to breathe for another man. No man can use his brain to think for another. All the functions of body and spirit are private.

They cannot be shared or transferred.

We inherit the products of the thought of other men. We inherit the wheel. We make a cart. The cart becomes an automobile. The automobile becomes an airplane. But all through the process what we receive from others is only the end product of their thinking. The moving force is the creative faculty which takes this product as material, uses it and originates the next step. This creative faculty cannot be given or received, shared or borrowed. It belongs to single, individual men. That which it creates is the property of the creator.

Men learn from one another. But all learning is only the exchange of material. No man can give another the capacity to think. Yet that capacity is our only means of survival.

Nothing is given to man on earth. Everything he needs has to be produced. And here man faces his basic alternative: he can survive in only one of two ways—by the independent work of his own mind or as a parasite fed by the minds of others. The creator originates. The parasite borrows. The creator faces nature alone. The parasite faces nature through an intermediary.

The creator's concern is the conquest of nature. The parasite's concern is the conquest of men.

The creator lives for his work. He needs no other men. His primary goal is within himself. The parasite lives second-hand. He needs others. Others become his prime motive.

The basic need of the creator is independence. The reasoning mind cannot work under any form of compulsion. It cannot be curbed, sacrificed or subordinated to any

consideration whatsoever. It demands total independence in function and in motive. To a creator, all relations with men are secondary.

The basic need of the second-hander is to secure his ties with men in order to be fed. He places relations first. He declares that man exists in order to serve others. He preaches altruism.

Altruism is the doctrine which demands that man live for others and place others above self.

No man can live for another. He cannot share his spirit just as he cannot share his body. But the second-hander has used altruism as a weapon of exploitation and reversed the base of mankind's moral principles. Men have been taught every precept that destroys the creator. Men have been taught dependence as a virtue.

The man who attempts to live for others is a dependent. He is a parasite in motive and makes parasites of those he serves. The relationship produces nothing but mutual corruption. It is impossible in concept. The nearest approach to it in reality—the man who lives to serve others—is the slave. If physical slavery is repulsive, how much more repulsive is the concept of servility of the spirit? The conquered slave has a vestige of honor. He has the merit of having resisted and of considering his condition evil. But the man who enslaves himself voluntarily in the name of love is the basest of creatures. He degrades the dignity of man and he degrades the conception of love. But this is the essence of altruism.

Men have been taught that the highest virtue is not to achieve, but to give. Yet one cannot give that which has not been created. Creation comes before distribution—or there will be nothing to distribute. The need of the creator comes before the need of any possible beneficiary. Yet we are taught to admire the second-hander who dispenses gifts he has not produced above the man who made the gifts possible. We praise an act of charity. We shrug at an act of achievement.

Men have been taught that their first concern is to relieve the sufferings of others. But suffering is a disease. Should one come upon it, one tries to give relief and assistance. To make that the highest test of virtue is to make suffering the most important part of life. Then man must wish to see others suffer—in order that he may be virtuous. Such is the nature of altruism. The creator is not concerned with disease, but with life. Yet the work of the creators has eliminated one form of disease after another, in man's body and spirit, and brought more relief from suffering than any altruist could ever conceive.

Men have been taught that it is a virtue to agree with others. But the creator is the man who disagrees. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to swim with the current. But the creator is the man who goes against the current. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to stand together. But the creator is the man who stands alone.

Men have been taught that the ego is the synonym of evil, and selflessness the ideal of virtue. But the creator is the egotist in the absolute sense, and the selfless man is the one who does not think, feel, judge or act. These are functions of the self.

Here the basic reversal is most deadly. The issue has been perverted and man has been left no alternative—and no freedom. As poles of good and evil, he was offered two conceptions: egotism and altruism. Egotism was held to mean the sacrifice of others to self.

Altruism—the sacrifice of self to others. This tied man irrevocably to other men and left him nothing but a choice of pain: his own pain borne for the sake of others or pain inflicted upon others for the sake of self. When it was added that man must find joy in self-immolation, the trap was closed. Man was forced to accept masochism as his ideal—under the threat that sadism was his only alternative. This was the greatest fraud ever perpetrated on mankind.

This was the device by which dependence and suffering were perpetuated as fundamentals of life.

The choice is not self-sacrifice or domination. The choice is independence or dependence. The code of the creator or the code of the second-hander. This is the basic issue. It rests upon the alternative of life or death. The code of the creator is built on the needs of the reasoning mind which allows man to survive. The code of the second-hander is built on the needs of a mind incapable of survival. All that which proceeds from man's independent ego is good. All that which proceeds from man's dependence upon men is evil.

The egotist in the absolute sense is not the man who sacrifices others. He is the man who stands above the need of using others in any manner. He does not function through them. He is not concerned with them in any primary matter. Not in his aim, not in his motive, not in his thinking, not in his desires, not in the source of his energy. He does not exist for any other man—and he asks no other man to exist for him. This is the only form of brotherhood and mutual respect possible between men.

Degrees of ability vary, but the basic principle remains the same: the degree of a man's

independence, initiative and personal love for his work determines his talent as a worker and his worth as a man.

Independence is the only gauge of human virtue and value. What a man is and makes of himself; not what he has or hasn't done for others. There is no substitute for personal dignity. There is no standard of personal dignity except independence.

In all proper relationships there is no sacrifice of anyone to anyone. An architect needs clients, but he does not subordinate his work to their wishes. They need him, but they do not order a house just to give him a commission. Men exchange their work by free, mutual consent to mutual advantage when their personal interests agree and they both desire the exchange. If they do not desire it, they are not forced to deal with each other. They seek further. This is the only possible form of relationship between equals. Anything else is a relation of slave to master, or victim to executioner.

No work is ever done collectively, by a majority decision. Every creative job is achieved under the guidance of a single individual thought. An architect requires a great many men to erect his building. But he does not ask them to vote on his design. They work

together by free agreement and each is free in his proper function. An architect uses steel, glass, concrete, produced by others. But the materials remain just so much steel, glass and concrete until he touches them. What he does with them is his individual product and his individual property. This is the only pattern for proper cooperation among men.

The first right on earth is the right of the ego. Man's first duty is to himself. His moral law is never to place his prime goal within the persons of others. His moral obligation is to do what he wishes, provided his wish does not depend primarily upon other men. This includes the whole sphere of his creative faculty, his thinking, his work. But it does not include the sphere of the gangster, the altruist and the dictator.

A man thinks and works alone. A man cannot rob, exploit or rule— alone. Robbery, exploitation and ruling presuppose victims. They imply dependence. They are the province of the second-hander.

Rulers of men are not egotists. They create nothing. They exist entirely through the persons of others. Their goal is in their subjects, in the activity of enslaving. They are as dependent as the beggar, the social worker and the bandit. The form of dependence does not matter.

But men were taught to regard second-handers—tyrants, emperors, dictators—as

exponents of egotism. By this fraud they were made to destroy the ego, themselves and others. The purpose of the fraud was to destroy the creators. Or to harness them. Which is a synonym.

From the beginning of history, the two antagonists have stood face to face: the creator and the second-hander. When the first creator invented the wheel, the first second-hander responded. He invented altruism.

The creator—denied, opposed, persecuted, exploited—went on, moved forward and carried all humanity along on his energy. The second-hander contributed nothing to the process except the impediments. The contest has another name: the individual against the collective.

The ‘common good’ of a collective—a race, a class, a state—was the claim and justification of every tyranny ever established over men. Every major horror of history was committed in the name of an altruistic motive. Has any act of selfishness ever equaled the carnage perpetrated by disciples of altruism? Does the fault lie in men’s hypocrisy or in the nature of the principle? The most dreadful butchers were the most sincere. They believed in the perfect society reached through the guillotine and the firing squad. Nobody questioned their right to murder since they were murdering for an altruistic purpose. It was accepted that man must be sacrificed for other men. Actors change, but the course of the tragedy remains the same. A humanitarian who starts with declarations of love for mankind and ends with a sea of blood. It goes on and will go on so long as men believe that an action is good if it is unselfish. That permits the altruist to act and forces his victims to bear it. The leaders of collectivist movements ask nothing for themselves. But observe the results.

The only good which men can do to one another and the only statement of their proper relationship is—Hands off!

Now observe the results of a society built on the principle of individualism. This, our country. The noblest country in the history of men. The country of greatest achievement, greatest prosperity, greatest freedom. This country was not based on selfless service, sacrifice, renunciation or any precept of altruism. It was based on a man’s right to the pursuit of happiness. His own happiness. Not anyone else’s. A private, personal, selfish motive. Look at the results. Look into your own conscience.

It is an ancient conflict. Men have come close to the truth, but it was destroyed each time and one civilization fell after another.

Civilization is the progress toward a society of privacy. The savage's whole existence is public, ruled by the laws of his tribe. Civilization is the process of setting man free from men.

Now, in our age, collectivism, the rule of the second-hander and second-rater, the ancient monster, has broken loose and is running amuck. It has brought men to a level of intellectual indecency never equaled on earth. It has reached a scale of horror without precedent. It has poisoned every mind. It has swallowed most of Europe. It is engulfing our country.

I am an architect. I know what is to come by the principle on which it is built. We are approaching a world in which I cannot permit myself to live.

Now you know why I dynamited Cortlandt.

I designed Cortlandt. I gave it to you. I destroyed it.

I destroyed it because I did not choose to let it exist. It was a double monster. In form and in implication. I had to blast both. The form was mutilated by two second-handers who assumed the right to improve upon that which they had not made and could not equal.

They were permitted to do it by the general implication that the altruistic purpose of the building superseded all rights and that I had no claim to stand against it.

I agreed to design Cortlandt for the purpose of seeing it erected as I designed it and for no other reason. That was the price I set for my work. I was not paid.

I do not blame Peter Keating. He was helpless. He had a contract with his employers. It was ignored. He had a promise that the

structure he offered would be built as designed. The promise was broken. The love of a man for the integrity of his work and his right to preserve it are now considered a vague intangible and an inessential. You have heard the prosecutor say that. Why was the building disfigured? For no reason. Such acts never have any reason, unless it's the vanity of some second-handers who feel they have a right to anyone's property, spiritual or material. Who permitted them to do it? No particular man among the dozens in authority. No one cared to permit it or to stop it. No one was responsible. No one can be held to account. Such is the nature of all collective action.

I did not receive the payment I asked. But the owners of Cortlandt got what they needed

from me. They wanted a scheme devised to build a structure as cheaply as possible. They found no one else who could do it to their satisfaction. I could and did. They took the benefit of my work and made me contribute it as a gift. But I am not an altruist. I do not contribute gifts of this nature.

It is said that I have destroyed the home of the destitute. It is forgotten that but for me the destitute could not have had this particular home. Those who were concerned with the poor had to come to me, who have never been concerned, in order to help the poor. It is believed that the poverty of the future tenants gave them the right to my work. That their need constituted a claim on my life. That it was my duty to contribute anything demanded of me. This is the second-handers' credo now swallowing the world.

I came here to say that I do not recognize anyone's right to one minute of my life. Nor to any part of my energy. Nor to any achievement of mine. No matter who makes the claim, how large their number or how great their need.

I wished to come here and say that I am a man who does not exist for others. It had to be said. The world is perishing from an orgy of self-sacrificing.

I wished to come here and say that the integrity of a man's creative work is of greater importance than any charitable endeavor. Those of you who do not understand this are the men who are destroying the world. I wished to come here and state my terms. I do not care to exist on any others.

I recognize no obligations toward men except one: to respect their freedom and to take no part in a slave society. To my country, I wish to give the ten years which I will spend in jail if my country exists no longer. I will spend them in memory and in gratitude for what my country has been. It will be my act of loyalty, my refusal to live or work in what has taken its place.

My act of loyalty to every creator who ever lived and was made to suffer by the force responsible for the Cortlandt I dynamited. To every tortured hour of loneliness, denial, frustration, abuse he was made to spend—and to the battles he won. To every creator whose name is known—and to every creator who lived, struggled and perished unrecognized before he could achieve. To every creator who was destroyed in body or in spirit. To Henry Cameron. To Steven Mallory. To a man who doesn't want to be named, but who is sitting in this courtroom and knows that I am speaking of him.

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On Virtue Ethics – Aristotle

From "Book II" in *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle

Introduction

The following selection is from Book II of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In Book I Aristotle argues that the highest human good is eudaimonia (total well-being, or happiness). It is, he says, our only self-sufficient goal and the ultimate goal of all human action. He then argues that human happiness is determined by the proper function of humans, which he defines as "an activity of the soul or a course of action in accordance with reason." Thus, a happy individual is one who lives in accordance with reason, and everyone should develop virtues (character traits or dispositions) that lead to this goal. Because human reason is both practical and intellectual, human virtues come in two kinds, moral and intellectual.

In Book II Aristotle turns to a discussion of the moral virtues. After stressing the importance of childhood training and self-discipline in the development of moral virtues, he proceeds to define the nature of moral virtue. Moral virtue is, he concludes, a "mean" between the vices of deficiency and excess; that is, virtue is a form of moderation, a midpoint between two extremes. Courage, for example, is a midpoint between cowardice and foolhardiness.

The text was taken from the Perseus Digital Library hosted by Tufts University. The reader is encouraged to take into consideration the footnotes and to explore the connections between texts at Perseus.

Text

Chapter 1

[1] Virtue being, as we have seen, of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue is for the most part both produced and increased by instruction, and therefore requires experience and time; whereas moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (*ethos*), and has indeed derived its name, with a slight variation of form, from that word.²⁷

[2] And therefore it is clear that none of the moral virtues formed is engendered in us by nature, for no natural property can be altered by habit. For instance, it is the nature of a stone to move downwards, and it cannot be trained to move upwards, even though you should try to train it to do so by throwing it up into the air ten thousand times; nor can fire be trained to move downwards, nor can anything else that naturally behaves in one way be trained into a habit of behaving in another way.

[3] The virtues²⁸ therefore are engendered in us neither by nature nor yet in violation of nature; nature gives us the capacity to receive them, and this capacity is brought to maturity by habit.

[4] Moreover, the faculties given us by nature are bestowed on us first in a potential form; we exhibit their actual exercise afterwards. This is clearly so with our senses: we did not acquire the faculty of sight or hearing by repeatedly seeing or repeatedly listening, but the other way about—because we had the senses we began to use them, we did not get them by using them. The virtues on the other hand we acquire by first having actually practiced them, just as we do the arts. We learn an art or craft by doing the things that we shall have to do when we have learnt it²⁹: for instance, men become builders by building houses, harpers by playing on the harp. Similarly, we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.

[5] This truth is attested by the experience of states: lawgivers make the citizens good by training them in habits of right action—this is the aim of all legislation, and if it fails to do this it is a failure; this is what distinguishes a good form of constitution from a bad one.

[6] Again, the actions from or through which any virtue is produced are the same as those through which it also is destroyed—just as is the case with skill in the arts, for both the good harpers and the bad ones are produced by harping, and similarly with builders and all the other craftsmen: as you will become a good builder from building well, so you will

²⁷ It is probable that *ethos*, or 'habit' and *hathos*, 'character' whence 'ethical,' moral are kindred words.

²⁸ ἀρετή is here as often in this and the following Books employed in the limited sense of 'moral excellence' or 'goodness of character,' i.e. virtue in the ordinary sense of the term.

²⁹ Or possibly 'For things that we have to learn to do [in contrast with things that we do by nature], we learn by doing them.'

become a bad one from building badly.

[7] Were this not so, there would be no need for teachers of the arts, but everybody would be born a good or bad craftsman as the case might be. The same then is true of the virtues. It is by taking part in transactions with our fellow-men that some of us become just and others unjust; by acting in dangerous situations and forming a habit of fear or of confidence we become courageous or cowardly. And the same holds good of our dispositions with regard to the appetites, and anger; some men become temperate and gentle, others profligate and irascible, by actually comporting themselves in one way or the other in relation to those passions. In a word, our moral dispositions are formed as a result of the corresponding activities.

[8] Hence it is incumbent on us to control the character of our activities, since on the quality of these depends the quality of our dispositions. It is therefore not of small moment whether we are trained from childhood in one set of habits or another; on the contrary it is of very great, or rather of supreme, importance.

Chapter 2

[1] As then our present study, unlike the other branches of philosophy, has a practical aim (for we are not investigating the nature of virtue for the sake of knowing what it is, but in order that we may become good, without which result our investigation would be of no use), we have consequently to carry our enquiry into the region of conduct, and to ask how we are to act rightly; since our actions, as we have said, determine the quality of our dispositions.

[2] Now the formula 'to act in conformity with right principle' is common ground, and may be assumed as the basis of our discussion. (We shall speak about this formula later,³⁰ and consider both the definition of right principle and its relation to the other virtues.)

[3] But let it be granted to begin with that the whole theory of conduct is bound to be an outline only and not an exact system, in accordance with the rule we laid down at the beginning,³¹ that philosophical theories must only be required to correspond to their subject matter; and matters of conduct and expediency have nothing fixed or invariable about them, any more than have matters of health.

[4] And if this is true of the general theory of ethics, still less is exact precision possible in

³⁰ i.e., in Bk. 6. For the sense in which 'the right principle' can be said to be the virtue of Prudence see 6.13.5 note.

³¹ See 1.3.1.

dealing with particular cases of conduct; for these come under no science or professional tradition, but the agents themselves have to consider what is suited to the circumstances on each occasion, just as is the case with the art of medicine or of navigation.

[5] But although the discussion now proceeding is thus necessarily inexact, we must do our best to help it out.

[6] First of all then we have to observe, that moral qualities are so constituted as to be destroyed by excess and by deficiency—as we see is the case with bodily strength and health (for one is forced to explain what is invisible by means of visible illustrations). Strength is destroyed both by excessive and by deficient exercises, and similarly health is destroyed both by too much and by too little food and drink; while they are produced, increased and preserved by suitable quantities.

[7] The same therefore is true of Temperance, Courage, and the other virtues. The man who runs away from everything in fear and never endures anything becomes a coward; the man who fears nothing whatsoever but encounters everything becomes rash. Similarly, he that indulges in every pleasure and refrains from none turns out a profligate, and he that shuns all pleasure, as boorish persons do, becomes what may be called insensible. Thus Temperance and Courage are destroyed by excess and deficiency, and preserved by the observance of the mean.

[8] But³² not only are the virtues both generated and fostered on the one hand, and destroyed on the other, from and by the same actions, but they will also find their full exercise in the same actions. This is clearly the case with the other more visible qualities, such as bodily strength: for strength is produced by taking much food and undergoing much exertion, while also it is the strong man who will be able to eat most food and endure most exertion.

[9] The same holds good with the virtues. We become temperate by abstaining from pleasures, and at the same time we are best able to abstain from pleasures when we have become temperate. And so with Courage: we become brave by training ourselves to despise and endure terrors, and we shall be best able to endure terrors when we have become brave.

Chapter 3

³² We here resume from the end of chap. 1. The preceding paragraphs, repeating from Bk. 1. the caution as to method, and introducing the doctrine of the Mean, which is to be developed below, are parenthetical.

An index of our dispositions is afforded by the pleasure or pain that accompanies our actions. A man is temperate if he abstains from bodily pleasures and finds this abstinence itself enjoyable, profligate if he feels it irksome; he is brave if he faces danger with pleasure or at all events without pain, cowardly if he does so with pain.

In fact pleasures and pains are the things with which moral virtue is concerned.

For

1. pleasure causes us to do base actions and pain cause us to abstain from doing noble actions.

Hence the importance, as Plato points out, of having been definitely trained from childhood to like and dislike the proper things; this is what good education means.

2. Again, if the virtues have to do with actions and feelings, and every action is attended with pleasure or pain, this too shows that virtue has to do with pleasure and pain.
3. Another indication is the fact that pain is the medium of punishment; for punishment is a sort of medicine, and the nature of medicine to work by means of opposites.³³
4. Again, as we said before, every formed disposition of the soul realizes its full nature³⁴ in relation to and in dealing with that class of objects by which it is its nature to be corrupted or improved. But men are corrupted through pleasures and pains, that is, either by pursuing and avoiding the wrong pleasures and pains, or by pursuing and avoiding them at the wrong time, or in the wrong manner, or in one of the other wrong ways under which errors of conduct can be logically classified.

This is why some thinkers³⁵ define the virtues as states of impassivity or tranquility, though they make a mistake in using these terms absolutely, without adding ‘in the right (or wrong) manner’ and ‘at the right (or wrong)

³³ The contrary maxim to *similia similibus curantur* or homoeopayour. Fever, caused by heat, is cured by cold, hence if the remedy for wickedness is pain, it must have been caused by pleasure.

³⁴ i.e., is actively exercised when fully developed, cf. 2.8.

³⁵ The reference is probably to Speusippus, although in the extant remains of Greek philosophy apayour, or freedom from passions or emotions, first appears as an ethical ideal of the Stoics.

time' and the other qualifications.

We assume therefore that moral virtue is the quality of acting in the best way in relation to pleasures and pains, and that vice is the opposite.

But the following considerations also will give us further light on the same point.

5. There are three things that are the motives of choice and three that are the motives of avoidance; namely,
 - a. the noble,
 - b. the expedient, and the
 - c. pleasant,and their opposites,
 - a. the base,
 - b. the harmful, and
 - c. the painful.

Now in respect of all these the good man is likely to go right and the bad to go wrong, but especially in respect of pleasure; for pleasure is common to man with the lower animals, and also it is a concomitant of all the objects of choice, since both the noble and the expedient appear to us pleasant.

6. Again, the susceptibility to pleasure has grown up with all of us from the cradle. Hence this feeling is hard to eradicate, being engrained in the fabric of our lives.
7. Again, pleasure and pain are also³⁶ the standards by which we all, in a greater or less degree, regulate our actions.

On this account therefore pleasure and pain are necessarily our main concern, since to feel pleasure and pain rightly or wrongly has a great effect on conduct.

8. And again, it is harder to fight against pleasure than against anger (hard as

³⁶ Sc., as well as being the sources of our feelings.

that is, as Heraclitus³⁷ says); but virtue, like art, is constantly dealing with what is harder, since the harder the task the better is success. For this reason also therefore pleasure and pain are necessarily the main concern both of virtue and of political science, since he who comports himself towards them rightly will be good, and he who does so wrongly, bad.

Chapter 4

[1] We may then take it as established that virtue has to do with pleasures and pains, that the actions which produce it are those which increase it, and also, if differently performed, destroy it, and that the actions from which it was produced are also those in which it is exercised.

A difficulty may however be raised as to what we mean by saying that in order to become just men must do just actions, and in order to become temperate they must do temperate actions. For if they do just and temperate actions, they are just and temperate already, just as, if they spell correctly or play in tune, they are scholars or musicians.

[2] But perhaps this is not the case even with the arts. It is possible to spell a word correctly by chance, or because some one else prompts you; hence you will be a scholar only if you spell correctly in the scholar's way, that is, in virtue of the scholarly knowledge which you yourself possess.

[3] Moreover the case of the arts is not really analogous to that of the virtues. Works of art have their merit in themselves, so that it is enough if they are produced having a certain quality of their own; but acts done in conformity with the virtues are not done justly or temperately if they themselves are of a certain sort, but only if the agent also is in a certain state of mind when he does them:

- first he must act with knowledge³⁸;
- secondly he must deliberately choose the act, and choose it for its own sake; and
- thirdly the act must spring from a fixed and permanent disposition of character.

³⁷ Heraclitus, Fr. 105 (Bywater) θυμῷ μάχεσθαι χαλεπὸν: ὅ τι γὰρ ἂν χρηίζη γίνεσθαι, ψυχῆς ὀνέεται, 'it is hard to fight with anger [or 'desire,' θυμῷ in the Homeric sense, Burnet]. Whatever it wishes to get, it purchases at the cost of life.'

³⁸ See Bk. 3.1, where this is interpreted as meaning both knowledge of what he is doing (the act must not be unconscious or accidental), and knowledge of moral principle (he must know that the act is a right one).

For the possession of an art, none of these conditions is included, except the mere qualification of knowledge; but for the possession of the virtues, knowledge is of little or no avail, whereas the other conditions, so far from being of little moment, are all-important, inasmuch as virtue results from the repeated performance of just and temperate actions.

[4] Thus although actions are entitled just and temperate when they are such acts as just and temperate men would do, the agent is just and temperate not when he does these acts merely, but when he does them in the way in which just and temperate men do them.

[5] It is correct therefore to say that a man becomes just by doing just actions and temperate by doing temperate actions; and no one can have the remotest chance of becoming good without doing them.

[6] But the mass of mankind, instead of doing virtuous acts, have recourse to discussing virtue, and fancy that they are pursuing philosophy and that this will make them good men. In so doing they act like invalids who listen carefully to what the doctor says, but entirely neglect to carry out his prescriptions. That sort of philosophy will no more lead to a healthy state of soul than will the mode of treatment produce health of body.

Chapter 5

We have next to consider the formal definition of virtue.

A state of the soul is either

1. an emotion,
2. a capacity, or
3. a disposition;

virtue therefore must be one of these three things.

[2] By the emotions, I mean desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity; and generally those states of consciousness which are accompanied by pleasure or pain. The capacities are the faculties in virtue of which we can be said to be liable to the emotions, for example, capable of feeling anger or pain³⁹ or pity. The dispositions are the formed states of character in virtue of which we are well or ill-disposed in respect of the emotions; for instance, we have a bad disposition in regard

³⁹ Probably for 'pain' we should read 'fear.'

to anger if we are disposed to get angry too violently or not violently enough, a good disposition if we habitually feel a moderate amount of anger; and similarly in respect of the other emotions.

[3] Now the virtues and vices are not emotions because we are not pronounced good or bad according to our emotions, but we are according to our virtues and vices; nor are we either praised or blamed for our emotions—a man is not praised for being frightened or angry, nor is he blamed for being angry merely, but for being angry in a certain way— but we are praised or blamed for our virtues and vices.

[4] Again, we are not angry or afraid from choice, but the virtues are certain modes of choice, or at all events involve choice. Moreover, we are said to be ‘moved’ by the emotions, whereas in respect of the virtues and vices we are not said to be ‘moved’ but to be ‘disposed’ in a certain way.

[5] And the same considerations also prove that the virtues and vices are not capacities; since we are not pronounced good or bad, praised or blamed, merely by reason of our capacity for emotion. Again, we possess certain capacities by nature, but we are not born good or bad by nature: of this however we spoke before.

[6] If then the virtues are neither emotions nor capacities, it remains that they are dispositions.

Thus we have stated what virtue is generically.

Chapter 6

[1] But it is not enough merely to define virtue generically as a disposition; we must also say what species of disposition it is.

[2] It must then be premised that all excellence has a twofold effect on the thing to which it belongs: it not only renders the thing itself good, but it also causes it to perform its function well. For example, the effect of excellence in the eye is that the eye is good and functions well; since having good eyes means having good sight. Similarly excellence in a horse makes it a good horse, and also good at galloping, at carrying its rider, and at facing the enemy.

[3] If therefore this is true of all things, excellence or virtue in a man will be the disposition which renders him a good man and also which will cause him to perform his function well.

[4] We have already indicated⁴⁰ what this means; but it will throw more light on the subject if we consider what constitutes the specific nature of virtue.

Now of everything that is continuous⁴¹ and divisible, it is possible to take the larger part, or the smaller part, or an equal part, and these parts may be larger, smaller, and equal either with respect to the thing itself or relatively to us; the equal part being a mean between excess and deficiency.⁴²

[5] By the mean of the thing I denote a point equally distant from either extreme, which is one and the same for everybody; by the mean relative to us, that amount which is neither too much nor too little, and this is not one and the same for everybody.

[6] For example, let 10 be many and 2 few; then one takes the mean with respect to the thing if one takes 6;

[7] since $6 - 2 = 10 - 6$, and this is the mean according to arithmetical proportion.⁴³ But we cannot arrive by this method at the mean relative to us. Suppose that 10 lb. of food is a large ration for anybody and 2 lb. a small one: it does not follow that a trainer will prescribe 6 lb., for perhaps even this will be a large ration, or a small one, for the particular athlete who is to receive it; it is a small ration for a Milo,⁴⁴ but a large one for a man just beginning to go in for athletics. And similarly with the amount of running or wrestling exercise to be taken.

[8] In the same way then an expert in any art avoids excess and deficiency, and seeks and adopts the mean—the mean that is not of the thing but relative to us.

[9] If therefore the way in which every art or science performs its work well is by looking to the mean and applying that as a standard to its productions (hence the common

⁴⁰ 2.8 f.

⁴¹ i.e., without distinct parts, and so (if divisible at all), divisible at any point, as opposed to what is διηρημένον, 'discrete,' or made up of distinct parts and only divisible between them.

⁴² Greek comparatives, 'larger', 'smaller', etc., may also mean 'too large', 'too small', etc.; and there is the same ambiguity in the words translated 'excess' and 'deficiency'. Again μέσον, 'middle' or 'mean', is used as a synonym for μέτριον 'moderate' or of the right amount, and ἴσον 'equal' can mean 'equitable'.

Hence 'to take an equal part with respect to the thing itself' means to take a part equal to the part left, viz. a half; 'to take an equal part relatively to us,' means to take what is a fair or suitable amount.

The former is a mean as being exactly in the middle between all and none—if the thing in question is represented by a line, this is bisected at a point equidistant from its two ends; the latter is a mean in the sense of being the right amount for the recipient, and also of lying somewhere between any two other amounts that happen to be too much and too little for him.

⁴³ We should rather call this an arithmetical progression.

⁴⁴ A famous wrestler

remark about a perfect work of art, that you could not take from it nor add to it—meaning that excess and deficiency destroy perfection, while adherence to the mean preserves it)—if then, as we say, good craftsmen look to the mean as they work, and if virtue, like nature, is more accurate and better than any form of art, it will follow that virtue has the quality of hitting the mean.

[10] I refer to moral virtue,⁴⁵ is concerned with emotions and actions, in which one can have excess or deficiency or a due mean. For example, one can be frightened or bold, feel desire or anger or pity, and experience pleasure and pain in general, either too much or too little, and in both cases wrongly;

[11] whereas to feel these feelings at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner, is to feel the best amount of them, which is the mean amount—and the best amount is of course the mark of virtue.

[12] And similarly there can be excess, deficiency, and the due mean in actions. Now feelings and actions are the objects with which virtue is concerned; and in feelings and actions excess and deficiency are errors, while the mean amount is praised, and constitutes success; and to be praised and to be successful are both marks of virtue.

[13] Virtue, therefore is a mean state in the sense that it is able to hit the mean.

[14] Again, error is multiform (for evil is a form of the unlimited, as in the old Pythagorean imagery,⁴⁶ and good of the limited), whereas success is possible in one way only (which is why it is easy to fail and difficult to succeed—easy to miss the target and difficult to hit it); so this is another reason why excess and deficiency are a mark of vice, and observance of the mean a mark of virtue:

Goodness is simple, badness manifold.⁴⁷

[15] Virtue then is a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice⁴⁸ of actions and emotions, consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us, this being determined by principle, that is,⁴⁹ as the prudent man would determine it.

[16] And it is a mean state between two vices, one of excess and one of defect.

⁴⁵ The formula of the mean does not apply to the intellectual virtues.

⁴⁶ Cf. 1.6.7.

⁴⁷ The verse from an unknown source would come in better just before or just after the last parenthesis.

⁴⁸ Προαίρεσις, 'choice' or 'purpose', is discussed in Bk. 3.2, where see note.

⁴⁹ variant reading gives 'determined by principle, or whatever we like to call that by which the prudent man would determine it' (vide Taylor, Aristotle, p. 77)

Furthermore, it is a mean state in that whereas the vices either fall short of or exceed what is right in feelings and in actions, virtue ascertains and adopts the mean.

[17] Hence while in respect of its substance and the definition that states what it really is in essence virtue is the observance of the mean, in point of excellence and rightness it is an extreme.⁵⁰

[18] Not every action or emotion however admits of the observance of a due mean. Indeed the very names of some directly imply evil, for instance malice,⁵¹ shamelessness, envy, and, of actions, adultery, theft, murder. All these and similar actions and feelings are blamed as being bad in themselves; it is not the excess or deficiency of them that we blame. It is impossible therefore ever to go right in regard to them—one must always be wrong; nor does right or wrong in their case depend on the circumstances, for instance, whether one commits adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right manner; the mere commission of any of them is wrong.

[19] One might as well suppose there could be a due mean and excess and deficiency in acts of injustice or cowardice or profligacy, which would imply that one could have a medium amount of excess and of deficiency, an excessive amount of excess and a deficient amount of deficiency.

[20] But just as there can be no excess or deficiency in temperance and justice because the mean is in a sense an extreme,⁵² so there can be no observance of the mean nor excess nor deficiency in the corresponding vicious acts mentioned above, but however they are committed, they are wrong; since, to put it in general terms, there is no such thing as observing a mean in excess or deficiency, nor as exceeding or falling short in the observance of a mean.

Chapter 7.

We must not however rest content with stating this general definition, but must show that it applies to the particular virtues. In practical philosophy, although universal principles have a wider application,⁵³ those covering a particular part of the field possess a higher degree of truth; because conduct deals with particular facts, and our theories are

⁵⁰ Cf. 3.4.8.

⁵¹ See 7.15. The word means 'delight at another's misfortune', Schadenfreude.

⁵² See 6.17 above.

⁵³ Or 'have a wider acceptance.'

bound to accord with these.

Let us then take the particular virtues from the diagram.⁵⁴

[2] The observance of the mean in fear and confidence is Courage. The man that exceeds in fearlessness not designated by any special name (and this the case with many of the virtues and vices) ; he that exceeds in confidence is Rash; he that exceeds in fear and is deficient in confidence is Cowardly.

[3] In respect of pleasures and pains—not all of them, and to a less degree in respect of pains⁵⁵—the observance of the mean is Temperance, the excess Profligacy. Men deficient in the enjoyment of pleasures scarcely occur, and hence this character also has not been assigned a name, but we may call it Insensible.

[4] In regard to giving and getting money, the observance of the mean is Liberality; the excess and deficiency are Prodigality and Meanness,⁵⁶ but the prodigal man and the mean man exceed and fall short in opposite ways to one another: the prodigal exceeds in giving and is deficient in getting, whereas the mean man exceeds in getting and is deficient in giving.

[5] For the present then we describe these qualities in outline and summarily, which is enough for the purpose in hand; but they will be more accurately defined later.

[6] There are also other dispositions in relation to money, namely, the mode of observing the mean called Magnificence (the magnificent man being different from the liberal, as the former deals with large amounts and the latter with small ones), the excess called Tastelessness or Vulgarity, and the defect called Paltriness. These are not the same as Liberality and the vices corresponding to it; but the way in which they differ will be discussed later.

[7] In respect of honor and dishonor, the observance of the mean is Greatness of Soul, the excess a sort of Vanity, as it may be called, and the deficiency, Smallness of Soul.

[8] And just as we said that Liberality is related to Magnificence, differing from it in being concerned with small amounts of money, so there is a certain quality related to Greatness

⁵⁴ Here apparently the lecturer displayed a table of virtues (like the one in Aristot. Eud. Eth. 1220b 37), exhibiting each as a mean between two vices of excess and defect in respect of a certain class of action or feeling.

This is developed in detail in Bk. 3. 6–end and Bk. 4

⁵⁵ This parenthesis looks like an interpolation from 3.10.1.

⁵⁶ The Greek word is the negative of that translated Liberality, but ‘illiberality’ and ‘illiberal’ we do not usually employ with reference to money.

of Soul, which is concerned with great honors, while this quality itself is concerned with small honors; for it is possible to aspire to minor honors in the right way, or more than is right, or less. He who exceeds in these aspirations is called ambitious, he who is deficient, unambitious; but the middle character has no name, and the dispositions of these persons are also unnamed, except that that of the ambitious man is called Ambitiousness. Consequently the extreme characters put in a claim to the middle position, and in fact we ourselves sometimes call the middle person ambitious and sometimes unambitious: we sometimes praise a man for being ambitious, sometimes for being unambitious.

[9] Why we do so shall be discussed later; for the present let us classify the remaining virtues and vices on the lines which we have laid down. [

10] In respect of anger also we have excess, deficiency, and the observance of the mean. These states are virtually without names, but as we call a person of the middle character gentle, let us name the observance of the mean Gentleness, while of the extremes, he that exceeds may be styled irascible and his vice Irascibility, and he that is deficient, spiritless, and the deficiency Spiritlessness.

[11] There are also three other modes of observing a mean which bear some resemblance to each other, and yet are different; all have to do with intercourse in conversation and action, but they differ in that one is concerned with truthfulness of speech and behavior, and the other with pleasantness, in its two divisions of pleasantness in social amusement and pleasantness in the general affairs of life. We must then discuss these qualities also, in order the better to discern that in all things the observance of the mean is to be praised, while the extremes are neither right nor praiseworthy, but reprehensible. Most of these qualities also are unnamed, but in these as in the other cases we must attempt to coin names for them ourselves, for the sake of clearness and so that our meaning may be easily followed.

[12] In respect of truth then, the middle character may be called truthful, and the observance of the mean Truthfulness⁵⁷; pretense in the form of exaggeration is Boastfulness, and its possessor a boaster; in the form of understatement, Self-depreciation, and its possessor the self-depreciator.

⁵⁷ From Bk. 4.7 it appears that the quality intended is sincerity of speech and conduct in the matter of asserting one's own merits. The observance of the mean in this respect is there said to have no name; and here the form of expression apologizes for using 'Truthfulness' in so limited a sense. The defect in this respect Aristotle expresses by εἰρωνεία, a word specially associated with the affectation of ignorance practiced by Socrates. Neither this nor its other shades of meaning correspond very closely to that of its English derivative irony.

[13] In respect of pleasantness and social amusement, the middle character is witty and the middle disposition Wittiness; the excess is Buffoonery and its possessor a buffoon; the deficient man may be called boorish, and his disposition Boorishness. In respect of general pleasantness in life, the man who is pleasant in the proper manner is friendly, and the observance of the mean is Friendliness; he that exceeds, if from no interested motive, is obsequious, if for his own advantage, a flatterer; he that is deficient, and unpleasant in all the affairs of life, may be called quarrelsome and surly.

[14] There are also modes of observing a mean in the sphere of and in relation to the emotions. For⁵⁸ in these also one man is spoken of as moderate and another as excessive—for example the bashful man whose modesty takes alarm at everything; while he that is deficient in shame, or abashed at nothing whatsoever, is shameless, and the man of middle character modest. For though Modesty is not a virtue, it is praised, and so is the modest man.

[15] Again, Righteous Indignation is the observance of a mean between Envy and Malice,⁵⁹ and these qualities are concerned with pain and pleasure felt at the fortunes of one's neighbors. The righteously indignant man is pained by undeserved good fortune; the jealous man exceeds him and is pained by all the good fortune of others;⁶⁰ while the malicious man so far falls short of being pained that he actually feels pleasure. [16]

These qualities however it will be time to discuss in another place. After them we will treat Justice,⁶¹ distinguishing its two kinds—for it has more than one sense—and showing in what way each is a mode of observing the mean. [And we will deal similarly with the logical virtues.⁶²

Chapter 8

There are then three dispositions—two vices, one of excess and one of defect, and one virtue which is the observance of the mean; and each of them is in a certain way opposed to both the others. For the extreme states are the opposite both of the middle state and of

⁵⁸ This sentence in the mss. follows the next one.

⁵⁹ See 6.18 (and note): there envy and 'rejoicing-in-evil' come in a list of emotions in which a due mean is impossible; and in Aristot. Rh. 1386b 34 they are said to be two sides of the same character. The present attempt to force them into the scheme as opposite extremes is not very successful, and it is noteworthy that this group of qualities is omitted in Bk. 4.

⁶⁰ It is difficult not to think that some words have been lost here, such as 'and the righteously indignant man is pained by the undeserved misfortune of others.'

⁶¹ Bk. 6

⁶² Grant rightly rejects this sentence, since the intellectual virtues are nowhere else thus designated by Aristotle, nor does he regard them as modes of observing a mean.

each other, and the middle state is the opposite of both extremes;

[2] since just as the equal is greater in comparison with the less and less in comparison with the greater, so the middle states of character are in excess as compared with the defective states and defective as compared with the excessive states, whether in the case of feelings or of actions. For instance, a brave man appears rash in contrast with a coward and cowardly in contrast with a rash man; similarly a temperate man appears profligate in contrast with a man insensible to pleasure and pain, but insensible in contrast with a profligate; and a liberal man seems prodigal in contrast with a mean man, mean in contrast with one who is prodigal.

[3] Hence either extreme character tries to push the middle character towards the other extreme; a coward calls a brave man rash and a rash man calls him a coward, and correspondingly in other cases.

[4] But while all three dispositions are thus opposed to one another, the greatest degree of contrariety exists between the two extremes. For the extremes are farther apart from each other than from the mean, just as great is farther from small and small from great than either from equal.

[5] Again⁶³ some extremes show a certain likeness to the mean—for instance, Rashness resembles Courage, Prodigality Liberality, whereas the extremes display the greatest unlikeness to one another. But it is things farthest apart from each other that logicians define as contraries, so that the farther apart things are the more contrary they are.

[6] And in some cases the defect, in others the excess, is more opposed to the mean; for example Cowardice, which is a vice of deficiency, is more opposed to Courage than is Rashness which is a vice of excess; but Profligacy, or excess of feeling, is more opposed to Temperance than is Insensibility, or lack of feeling.

[7] This results from either of two causes. One of these arises from the thing itself; owing to one extreme being nearer to the mean and resembling it more, we count not this but rather the contrary extreme as the opposite of the mean; for example, because Rashness seems to resemble Courage more than Cowardice does, and to be nearer to it, we reckon Cowardice rather than Rashness as the contrary of Courage; for those extremes which are more remote from the mean are thought to be more contrary to it.

⁶³ This sentence should perhaps follow the next one, as it gives a second test of opposition, viz. unlikeness. However, unlikeness and remoteness are blended together in 8.7.

[8] This then is one cause, arising out of the thing itself. The other cause has its origin in us: those things appear more contrary to the mean to which we are ourselves more inclined by nature. For example, we are of ourselves more inclined to pleasure, which is why we are prone to Profligacy [more than to Propriety].⁶⁴ We therefore rather call those things the contrary of the mean, into which we are more inclined to lapse; and hence Profligacy, the excess, is more particularly the contrary of Temperance

Chapter 9.

[1] Enough has now been said to show that moral virtue is a mean, and in what sense this is so, namely that it is a mean between two vices, one of excess and the other of defect; and that it is such a mean because it aims at hitting the middle point in feelings and in actions.

[2] This is why it is a hard task to be good, for it is hard to find the middle point in anything: for instance, not everybody can find the center of a circle, but only someone who knows geometry. So also anybody can become angry—that is easy, and so it is to give and spend money; but to be angry with or give money to the right person, and to the right amount, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way—this is not within everybody's power and is not easy; so that to do these things properly is rare, praiseworthy, and noble.

[3] Hence the first rule in aiming at the mean is to avoid that extreme which is the more opposed to the mean, as Calypso advises⁶⁵— “Steer the ship clear of yonder spray and surge.

” For of the two extremes one is a more serious error than the other. [4] Hence, inasmuch as to hit the mean extremely well is difficult,⁶⁶ the second-best way to sail,⁶⁷ as the saying goes, is to take the least of the evils; and the best way to do this will be the way we enjoin.

The second rule is to notice what are the errors to which we are ourselves most prone (as different men are inclined by nature to different faults)—and we shall discover what these are by observing the pleasure or pain that we experience—;

[5] then we must drag ourselves away in the opposite direction, for by steering wide of our

⁶⁴ These words are probably an interpolation, since the sense requires ‘more than to Insensibility’.

⁶⁵ Hom. Od. 12.219: really the words are said by Odysseus, conveying to his steersman Circe's advice, to avoid the whirlpool of Charybdis which will engulf them all, and steer nearer to the monster Scylla who will devour only some of them.

⁶⁶ Or ‘to hit the mean is extremely difficult.’

⁶⁷ A proverb, meaning to take to the oars when the wind fails.

besetting error we shall make a middle course. This is the method adopted by carpenters to straighten warped timber

[6] Thirdly, we must in everything be most of all on our guard against what is pleasant and against pleasure; for when pleasure is on her trial we are not impartial judges. The right course is therefore to feel towards pleasure as the elders of the people felt towards Helen,⁶⁸ and to apply⁶⁹ their words to her on every occasion; for if we roundly bid her be gone, we shall be less likely to err.

[7] These then, to sum up the matter, are the precautions that will best enable us to hit the mean. But no doubt it is a difficult thing to do, and especially in particular cases: for instance, it is not easy to define in what manner and with what people and on what sort of grounds and how long one ought to be angry; and in fact we sometimes praise men who err on the side of defect in this matter and call them gentle, sometimes those who are quick to anger and style them manly.

[8] However, we do not blame one who diverges a little from the right course, whether on the side of the too much or of the too little, but one who diverges more widely, for his error is noticed. Yet to what degree and how seriously a man must err to be blamed is not easy to define on principle. For in fact no object of perception is easy to define; and such questions of degree depend on particular circumstances, and the decision lies with perception.

[9] Thus much then is clear, that it is the middle disposition in each department of conduct that is to be praised, but that one should lean sometimes to the side of excess and sometimes to that of deficiency, since this is the easiest way of hitting the mean and the right course.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the English translation on Perseus, which is based upon the following work.

Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics, Book 2," in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, trans. H Rackham, vol. 19, 23 vols. (London: Harvard University Press, 1934),
<http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0086.tlg010.perseus->

⁶⁸ Hom. Il. 3.156–160.

⁶⁹ Or 'repeat'.

eng1:2.

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On the Doctrine of the Mean – Kong Fuzi

From *The Doctrine of the Mean* by Kong Fuzi⁷⁰

Introduction

Master Kong (Kong Fuzi — Latinization: Confucius) was a Chinese philosopher-politician who lived from 551 BCE to 479 BCE. His works and resulting schools of thought have had an incalculable impact upon Chinese philosophy and society, stressing social harmony and the golden rule (“not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself”).⁷¹

This selection is from *Zhongyong*, a Confucian text discusses the concept of duty (the Mean), the 5 relationships in a harmonious society, and contrasts the Superior Man with the mean (small) man.⁷² The Mean is similar to virtue in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, the middle point between two extremes or opposites. However, neither the text nor Kong Fuzi (that we have a record of) explicitly outlines a theory of ethics. Instead of theory, the ethical position is presented as advice and instruction.

Text

Instruction for the Path of Duty

What Heaven has conferred is called The Nature; an accordance with this nature is called The Path of duty; the regulation of this path is called Instruction. The path may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the path. On this account, the superior man does not wait till he sees things, to be cautious, nor till he hears things, to be apprehensive.

⁷⁰ Early romanization is Confucius.

⁷¹ Confucius. *The Analects of Confucius* (from the Chinese Classics). Translated by James Legge, 2002. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3330>. Book 12, Chapter 3

⁷² In the translated text, “the mean man” is used as the disharmonious person. We have used the language of “small man” to help avoid confusion with “The Mean”, which is the path the text advocates people walk in life.

There is nothing more visible than what is secret, and nothing more manifest than what is minute. Therefore the superior man is watchful over himself, when he is alone.

While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony.

This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actings in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue.

Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish.

The Course of the Mean

Chung-ni said, “The superior man embodies the course of the Mean; the small man acts contrary to the course of the Mean.

“The superior man’s embodying the course of the Mean is because he is a superior man, and so always maintains the Mean. The small man’s acting contrary to the course of the Mean is because he is a small man, and has no caution.”

The Master said, “Perfect is the virtue which is according to the Mean! Rare have they long been among the people, who could practice it!”

The Master said, “I know how it is that the path of the Mean is not walked in:—the knowing go beyond it, and the stupid do not come up to it. I know how it is that the path of the Mean is not understood:—The men of talents and virtue go beyond it, and the worthless do not come up to it.

“There is no body but eats and drinks. But they are few who can distinguish flavors.”

The Master said, “Alas! How is the path of the Mean untrodden!”

The Master said, “There was Shun:—He indeed was greatly wise! Shun loved to question others, and to study their words, though they might be shallow. He concealed what was bad in them and displayed what was good. He took hold of their two extremes, determined the Mean, and employed it in his government of the people. It was by this that he was Shun!”

The Master said “Men all say, ‘We are wise’; but being driven forward and taken in a net, a

trap, or a pitfall, they know not how to escape. Men all say, 'We are wise'; but happening to choose the course of the Mean, they are not able to keep it for a round month."

The Master said, "This was the manner of Hui:—he made choice of the Mean, and whenever he got hold of what was good, he clasped it firmly, as if wearing it on his breast, and did not lose it."

The Master said, "The kingdom, its states, and its families, may be perfectly ruled; dignities and emoluments may be declined; naked weapons may be trampled under the feet; but the course of the Mean cannot be attained to."

Tsze-lu asked about energy.

The Master said, "Do you mean the energy of the South, the energy of the North, or the energy which you should cultivate yourself?

"To show forbearance and gentleness in teaching others; and not to revenge unreasonable conduct:—this is the energy of southern regions, and the good man makes it his study.

"To lie under arms; and meet death without regret:—this is the energy of northern regions, and the forceful make it their study.

"Therefore, the superior man cultivates a friendly harmony, without being weak.—How firm is he in his energy! He stands erect in the middle, without inclining to either side.—How firm is he in his energy! When good principles prevail in the government of his country, he does not change from what he was in retirement. How firm is he in his energy! When bad principles prevail in the country, he maintains his course to death without changing.—How firm is he in his energy!"

The Master said, "To live in obscurity, and yet practice wonders, in order to be mentioned with honor in future ages:—this is what I do not do.

"The good man tries to proceed according to the right path, but when he has gone halfway, he abandons it:—I am not able so to stop.

"The superior man accords with the course of the Mean. Though he may be all unknown, unregarded by the world, he feels no regret.—It is only the sage who is able for this."

The way which the superior man pursues, reaches wide and far, and yet is secret. Common men and women, however ignorant, may intermeddle with the knowledge of it; yet in its

utmost reaches, there is that which even the sage does not know. Common men and women, however much below the ordinary standard of character, can carry it into practice; yet in its utmost reaches, there is that which even the sage is not able to carry into practice. Great as heaven and earth are, men still find some things in them with which to be dissatisfied. Thus it is that, were the superior man to speak of his way in all its greatness, nothing in the world would be found able to embrace it, and were he to speak of it in its minuteness, nothing in the world would be found able to split it.

It is said in the Book of Poetry,² “The hawk flies up to heaven; the fishes leap in the deep.” This expresses how this way is seen above and below.

The way of the superior man may be found, in its simple elements, in the intercourse of common men and women; but in its utmost reaches, it shines brightly through Heaven and earth.

The Master said “The path is not far from man. When men try to pursue a course, which is far from the common indications of consciousness, this course cannot be considered The Path.

“In the Book of Poetry, it is said, ‘In hewing an ax handle, in hewing an ax handle, the pattern is not far off. We grasp one ax handle to hew the other; and yet, if we look askance from the one to the other, we may consider them as apart.’ Therefore, the superior man governs men, according to their nature, with what is proper to them, and as soon as they change what is wrong, he stops.

“When one cultivates to the utmost the principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the path. What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others.

Chün Tzu—The Superior Man

“In the way of the superior man there are four things, to not one of which have I as yet attained.—

1. to serve my father, as I would require my son to serve me: to this I have not attained;
2. to serve my prince as I would require my minister to serve me: to this I have not attained;
3. to serve my elder brother as I would require my younger brother to serve me: to this I have not attained;

4. to set the example in behaving to a friend, as I would require him to behave to me: to this I have not attained.

Earnest in practicing the ordinary virtues, and careful in speaking about them, if, in his practice, he has anything defective, the superior man dares not but exert himself; and if, in his words, he has any excess, he dares not allow himself such license.

Thus his words have respect to his actions, and his actions have respect to his words; is it not just an entire sincerity which marks the superior man?"

The superior man does what is proper to the station in which he is; he does not desire to go beyond this.

In a position of wealth and honor, he does what is proper to a position of wealth and honor. In a poor and low position, he does what is proper to a poor and low position. Situated among barbarous tribes, he does what is proper to a situation among barbarous tribes. In a position of sorrow and difficulty, he does what is proper to a position of sorrow and difficulty. The superior man can find himself in no situation in which he is not himself.

In a high situation, he does not treat with contempt his inferiors. In a low situation, he does not court the favor of his superiors. He rectifies himself, and seeks for nothing from others, so that he has no dissatisfactions. He does not murmur against Heaven, nor grumble against men.

Thus it is that the superior man is quiet and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven, while the small man walks in dangerous paths, looking for lucky occurrences.

The Master said, "In archery we have something like the way of the superior man.

When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns round and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself."

The way of the superior man may be compared to what takes place in traveling, when to go to a distance we must first traverse the space that is near, and in ascending a height, when we must begin from the lower ground.

It is said in the Book of Poetry, "Happy union with wife and children is like the music of lutes and harps. When there is concord among brethren, the harmony is delightful and enduring. Thus may you regulate your family, and enjoy the pleasure of your wife and

children.”

The Master said, “In such a state of things, parents have entire complacency!”

The Master said, “How abundantly do spiritual beings display the powers that belong to them!

“We look for them, but do not see them; we listen to, but do not hear them; yet they enter into all things, and there is nothing without them.

“They cause all the people in the kingdom to fast and purify themselves, and array themselves in their richest dresses, in order to attend at their sacrifices. Then, like overflowing water, they seem to be over the heads, and on the right and left of their worshipers.

“It is said in the Book of Poetry, ‘The approaches of the spirits, you cannot surmise; and can you treat them with indifference?’

“Such is the manifestness of what is minute! Such is the impossibility of repressing the outgoings of sincerity!

The Five Relationships

“The duties of universal obligation are five and the virtues wherewith they are practiced are three. The duties are those

1. between sovereign and minister,
2. between father and son,
3. between husband and wife,
4. between elder brother and younger, and
5. those belonging to the intercourse of friends.

Those five are the duties of universal obligation. Knowledge, magnanimity, and energy, these three, are the virtues universally binding. And the means by which they carry the duties into practice is singleness.

“Some are born with the knowledge of those duties; some know them by study; and some acquire the knowledge after a painful feeling of their ignorance.

But the knowledge being possessed, it comes to the same thing. Some practice them with a natural ease; some from a desire for their advantages; and some by strenuous effort. But

the achievement being made, it comes to the same thing.”

The Master said, “To be fond of learning is to be near to knowledge. To practice with vigor is to be near to magnanimity. To possess the feeling of shame is to be near to energy.

“He who knows these three things knows how to cultivate his own character. Knowing how to cultivate his own character, he knows how to govern other men. Knowing how to govern other men, he knows how to govern the kingdom with all its states and families.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Confucius, “The Doctrine of the Mean By,” The Internet Classics Archive, accessed February 26, 2018, <http://classics.mit.edu/Confucius/doctmean.html>.

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On Higher Order Utilitarianism – John Stewart Mill

From *What Utilitarianism Is* by John Stewart Mill

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure. To give a clear view of the moral standard set up by the theory, much more requires to be said; in particular, what things it includes in the ideas of pain and pleasure; and to what extent this is left an open question. But these supplementary explanations do not affect the theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded — namely, that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain.

Now, such a theory of life excites in many minds, and among them in some of the most estimable in feeling and purpose, inveterate dislike. To suppose that life has (as they express it) no higher end than pleasure no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit

they designate as utterly mean and groveling; as a doctrine worthy only of swine, to whom the followers of Epicurus were, at a very early period, contemptuously likened; and modern holders of the doctrine are occasionally made the subject of equally polite comparisons by its German, French, and English assailants.

Higher and Lower Pleasures

When thus attacked, the Epicureans have always answered, that it is not they, but their accusers, who represent human nature in a degrading light; since the accusation supposes human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable. If this supposition were true, the charge could not be gainsaid, but would then be no longer an imputation; for if the sources of pleasure were precisely the same to human beings and to swine, the rule of life which is good enough for the one would be good enough for the other. The comparison of the Epicurean life to that of beasts is felt as degrading, precisely because a beast's pleasures do not satisfy a human being's conceptions of happiness. Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites, and when once made conscious of them, do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification. I do not, indeed, consider the Epicureans to have been by any means faultless in drawing out their scheme of consequences from the utilitarian principle. To do this in any sufficient manner, many Stoic, as well as Christian elements require to be included.

But there is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation. It must be admitted, however, that utilitarian writers in general have placed the superiority of mental over bodily pleasures chiefly in the greater permanency, safety, uncostliness, etc., of the former that is, in their circumstantial advantages rather than in their intrinsic nature. And on all these points utilitarians have fully proved their case; but they might have taken the other, and, as it may be called, higher ground, with entire consistency. It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.

If I am asked, what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the

two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account.

Now it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying, both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties. Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs. They would not resign what they possess more than he for the most complete satisfaction of all the desires which they have in common with him. If they ever fancy they would, it is only in cases of unhappiness so extreme, that to escape from it they would exchange their lot for almost any other, however undesirable in their own eyes.

A being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy, is capable probably of more acute suffering, and certainly accessible to it at more points, than one of an inferior type; but in spite of these liabilities, he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence. We may give what explanation we please of this unwillingness; we may attribute it to pride, a name which is given indiscriminately to some of the most and to some of the least estimable feelings of which mankind are capable: we may refer it to the love of liberty and personal independence, an appeal to which was with the Stoics one of the most effective means for the inculcation of it; to the love of power, or to the love of excitement, both of which do really enter into and contribute to it: but its most appropriate appellation is a sense of dignity, which all human beings possess in one form or other, and in some, though by no means in exact, proportion to their higher faculties, and which is so essential a part of the happiness of those in whom it is strong, that nothing which conflicts with it could be, otherwise than momentarily, an object of desire to them.

Whoever supposes that this preference takes place at a sacrifice of happiness that the superior being, in anything like equal circumstances, is not happier than the inferior confounds the two very different ideas, of happiness, and content. It is indisputable that the being whose capacities of enjoyment are low, has the greatest chance of having them fully satisfied; and a highly endowed being will always feel that any happiness which he

can look for, as the world is constituted, is imperfect. But he can learn to bear its imperfections, if they are at all bearable; and they will not make him envy the being who is indeed unconscious of the imperfections, but only because he feels not at all the good which those imperfections qualify. It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.

[...]

I have dwelt on this point, as being a necessary part of a perfectly just conception of Utility or Happiness, considered as the directive rule of human conduct. But it is by no means an indispensable condition to the acceptance of the utilitarian standard; for that standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether; and if it may possibly be doubted whether a noble character is always the happier for its nobleness, there can be no doubt that it makes other people happier, and that the world in general is immensely a gainer by it. Utilitarianism, therefore, could only attain its end by the general cultivation of nobleness of character, even if each individual were only benefited by the nobleness of others, and his own, so far as happiness is concerned, were a sheer deduction from the benefit. But the bare enunciation of such an absurdity as this last, renders refutation superfluous.

Happiness as an Aim

According to the Greatest Happiness Principle, as above explained, the ultimate end, with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable (whether we are considering our own good or that of other people), is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality; the test of quality, and the rule for measuring it against quantity, being the preference felt by those who in their opportunities of experience, to which must be added their habits of self-consciousness and self-observation, are best furnished with the means of comparison. This, being, according to the utilitarian opinion, the end of human action, is necessarily also the standard of morality; which may accordingly be defined, the rules and precepts for human conduct, by the observance of which an existence such as has been described might be, to the greatest extent possible, secured to all mankind; and not to them only, but, so far as the nature of things admits, to the whole sentient creation.

Against this doctrine, however, arises another class of objectors, who say that happiness, in any form, cannot be the rational purpose of human life and action; because, in the first place, it is unattainable: and they contemptuously ask, what right hast thou to be happy?

a question which Mr. Carlyle clenches by the addition, What right, a short time ago, hadst thou even to be? Next, they say, that men can do without happiness; that all noble human beings have felt this, and could not have become noble but by learning the lesson of Entsagen, or renunciation; which lesson, thoroughly learnt and submitted to, they affirm to be the beginning and necessary condition of all virtue.

The first of these objections would go to the root of the matter were it well founded; for if no happiness is to be had at all by human beings, the attainment of it cannot be the end of morality, or of any rational conduct. Though, even in that case, something might still be said for the utilitarian theory; since utility includes not solely the pursuit of happiness, but the prevention or mitigation of unhappiness; and if the former aim be chimerical, there will be all the greater scope and more imperative need for the latter, so long at least as mankind think fit to live, and do not take refuge in the simultaneous act of suicide recommended under certain conditions by Novalis. When, however, it is thus positively asserted to be impossible that human life should be happy, the assertion, if not something like a verbal quibble, is at least an exaggeration. If by happiness be meant a continuity of highly pleasurable excitement, it is evident enough that this is impossible.

A state of exalted pleasure lasts only moments, or in some cases, and with some intermissions, hours or days, and is the occasional brilliant flash of enjoyment, not its permanent and steady flame. Of this the philosophers who have taught that happiness is the end of life were as fully aware as those who taunt them. The happiness which they meant was not a life of rapture; but moments of such, in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with a decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as the foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing. A life thus composed, to those who have been fortunate enough to obtain it, has always appeared worthy of the name of happiness. And such an existence is even now the lot of many, during some considerable portion of their lives. The present wretched education, and wretched social arrangements, are the only real hindrance to its being attainable by almost all.

The objectors perhaps may doubt whether human beings, if taught to consider happiness as the end of life, would be satisfied with such a moderate share of it. But great numbers of mankind have been satisfied with much less. The main constituents of a satisfied life appear to be two, either of which by itself is often found sufficient for the purpose: tranquility, and excitement. With much tranquility, many find that they can be content with very little pleasure: with much excitement, many can reconcile themselves to a considerable quantity of pain.

There is assuredly no inherent impossibility in enabling even the mass of mankind to

unite both; since the two are so far from being incompatible that they are in natural alliance, the prolongation of either being a preparation for, and exciting a wish for, the other. It is only those in whom indolence amounts to a vice, that do not desire excitement after an interval of repose: it is only those in whom the need of excitement is a disease, that feel the tranquility which follows excitement dull and insipid, instead of pleasurable in direct proportion to the excitement which preceded it.

When people who are tolerably fortunate in their outward lot do not find in life sufficient enjoyment to make it valuable to them, the cause generally is, caring for nobody but themselves. To those who have neither public nor private affections, the excitements of life are much curtailed, and in any case dwindle in value as the time approaches when all selfish interests must be terminated by death: while those who leave after them objects of personal affection, and especially those who have also cultivated a fellow-feeling with the collective interests of mankind, retain as lively an interest in life on the eve of death as in the vigor of youth and health.

Next to selfishness, the principal cause which makes life unsatisfactory is want of mental cultivation. A cultivated mind I do not mean that of a philosopher, but any mind to which the fountains of knowledge have been opened, and which has been taught, in any tolerable degree, to exercise its faculties finds sources of inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds it; in the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry, the incidents of history, the ways of mankind, past and present, and their prospects in the future. It is possible, indeed, to become indifferent to all this, and that too without having exhausted a thousandth part of it; but only when one has had from the beginning no moral or human interest in these things, and has sought in them only the gratification of curiosity.

Now there is absolutely no reason in the nature of things why an amount of mental culture sufficient to give an intelligent interest in these objects of contemplation, should not be the inheritance of every one born in a civilized country. As little is there an inherent necessity that any human being should be a selfish egotist, devoid of every feeling or care but those which center in his own miserable individuality. Something far superior to this is sufficiently common even now, to give ample earnest of what the human species may be made. Genuine private affections and a sincere interest in the public good, are possible, though in unequal degrees, to every rightly brought up human being. In a world in which there is so much to interest, so much to enjoy, and so much also to correct and improve, everyone who has this moderate amount of moral and intellectual requisites is capable of an existence which may be called enviable; and unless such a person, through bad laws, or subjection to the will of others, is denied the liberty

to use the sources of happiness within his reach, he will not fail to find this enviable existence, if he escape the positive evils of life, the great sources of physical and mental suffering such as indigence, disease, and the unkindness, worthlessness, or premature loss of objects of affection.

The main stress of the problem lies, therefore, in the contest with these calamities, from which it is a rare good fortune entirely to escape; which, as things now are, cannot be obviated, and often cannot be in any material degree mitigated. Yet no one whose opinion deserves a moment's consideration can doubt that most of the great positive evils of the world are in themselves removable, and will, if human affairs continue to improve, be in the end reduced within narrow limits. Poverty, in any sense implying suffering, may be completely extinguished by the wisdom of society, combined with the good sense and providence of individuals. Even that most intractable of enemies, disease, may be indefinitely reduced in dimensions by good physical and moral education, and proper control of noxious influences; while the progress of science holds out a promise for the future of still more direct conquests over this detestable foe.

And every advance in that direction relieves us from some, not only of the chances which cut short our own lives, but, what concerns us still more, which deprive us of those in whom our happiness is wrapped up. As for vicissitudes of fortune, and other disappointments connected with worldly circumstances, these are principally the effect either of gross imprudence, of ill-regulated desires, or of bad or imperfect social institutions.

All the grand sources, in short, of human suffering are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely, conquerable by human care and effort; and though their removal is grievously slow though a long succession of generations will perish in the breach before the conquest is completed, and this world becomes all that, if will and knowledge were not wanting, it might easily be made yet every mind sufficiently intelligent and generous to bear a part, however small and inconspicuous, in the endeavor, will draw a noble enjoyment from the contest itself, which he would not for any bribe in the form of selfish indulgence consent to be without.

And this leads to the true estimation of what is said by the objectors concerning the possibility, and the obligation, of learning to do without happiness. Unquestionably it is possible to do without happiness; it is done involuntarily by nineteen-twentieths of mankind, even in those parts of our present world which are least deep in barbarism; and it often has to be done voluntarily by the hero or the martyr, for the sake of something which he prizes more than his individual happiness.

But this something, what is it, unless the happiness of others or some of the requisites of happiness? It is noble to be capable of resigning entirely one's own portion of happiness, or chances of it: but, after all, this self-sacrifice must be for some end; it is not its own end; and if we are told that its end is not happiness, but virtue, which is better than happiness, I ask, would the sacrifice be made if the hero or martyr did not believe that it would earn for others immunity from similar sacrifices? Would it be made if he thought that his renunciation of happiness for himself would produce no fruit for any of his fellow creatures, but to make their lot like his, and place them also in the condition of persons who have renounced happiness?

All honor to those who can abnegate for themselves the personal enjoyment of life, when by such renunciation they contribute worthily to increase the amount of happiness in the world; but he who does it, or professes to do it, for any other purpose, is no more deserving of admiration than the ascetic mounted on his pillar. He may be an inspiring proof of what men can do, but assuredly not an example of what they should.

Self-Sacrifice

Though it is only in a very imperfect state of the world's arrangements that anyone can best serve the happiness of others by the absolute sacrifice of his own, yet so long as the world is in that imperfect state, I fully acknowledge that the readiness to make such a sacrifice is the highest virtue which can be found in man. I will add, that in this condition the world, paradoxical as the assertion may be, the conscious ability to do without happiness gives the best prospect of realizing, such happiness as is attainable.

For nothing except that consciousness can raise a person above the chances of life, by making him feel that, let fate and fortune do their worst, they have not power to subdue him: which, once felt, frees him from excess of anxiety concerning the evils of life, and enables him, like many a Stoic in the worst times of the Roman Empire, to cultivate in tranquility the sources of satisfaction accessible to him, without concerning himself about the uncertainty of their duration, any more than about their inevitable end.

Meanwhile, let utilitarians never cease to claim the morality of self-devotion as a possession which belongs by as good a right to them, as either to the Stoic or to the Transcendentalist. The utilitarian morality does recognize in human beings the power of sacrificing their own greatest good for the good of others. It only refuses to admit that the sacrifice is itself a good. A sacrifice which does not increase, or tend to increase, the sum total of happiness, it considers as wasted. The only self-renunciation which it applauds, is devotion to the happiness, or to some of the means of happiness, of others; either of mankind collectively, or of individuals within the limits imposed by the collective

interests of mankind.

I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbor as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.

As the means of making the nearest approach to this ideal, utility would enjoin, first, that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness, or (as speaking practically it may be called) the interest, of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole; and secondly, that education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole; especially between his own happiness and the practice of such modes of conduct, negative and positive, as regard for the universal happiness prescribes; so that not only he may be unable to conceive the possibility of happiness to himself, consistently with conduct opposed to the general good, but also that a direct impulse to promote the general good may be in every individual one of the habitual motives of action, and the sentiments connected therewith may fill a large and prominent place in every human being's sentient existence. If the, impugnors of the utilitarian morality represented it to their own minds in this its, true character, I know not what recommendation possessed by any other morality they could possibly affirm to be wanting to it; what more beautiful or more exalted developments of human nature any other ethical system can be supposed to foster, or what springs of action, not accessible to the utilitarian, such systems rely on for giving effect to their mandates.

Expediency

Again, Utility is often summarily stigmatized as an immoral doctrine by giving it the name of Expediency, and taking advantage of the popular use of that term to contrast it with Principle. But the Expedient, in the sense in which it is opposed to the Right, generally means that which is expedient for the particular interest of the agent himself; as when a minister sacrifices the interests of his country to keep himself in place. When it means anything better than this, it means that which is expedient for some immediate object, some temporary purpose, but which violates a rule whose observance is expedient in a much higher degree.

The Expedient, in this sense, instead of being the same thing with the useful, is a branch of the hurtful. Thus, it would often be expedient, for the purpose of getting over some momentary embarrassment, or attaining some object immediately useful to ourselves or others, to tell a lie. But inasmuch as the cultivation in ourselves of a sensitive feeling on the subject of veracity, is one of the most useful, and the enfeeblement of that feeling one of the most hurtful, things to which our conduct can be instrumental; and inasmuch as any, even unintentional, deviation from truth, does that much towards weakening the trustworthiness of human assertion, which is not only the principal support of all present social well-being, but the insufficiency of which does more than any one thing that can be named to keep back civilization, virtue, everything on which human happiness on the largest scale depends; we feel that the violation, for a present advantage, of a rule of such transcendent expediency, is not expedient, and that he who, for the sake of a convenience to himself or to some other individual, does what depends on him to deprive mankind of the good, and inflict upon them the evil, involved in the greater or less reliance which they can place in each other's word, acts the part of one of their worst enemies. Yet that even this rule, sacred as it is, admits of possible exceptions, is acknowledged by all moralists; the chief of which is when the withholding of some fact (as of information from a malefactor, or of bad news from a person dangerously ill) would save an individual (especially an individual other than oneself) from great and unmerited evil, and when the withholding can only be effected by denial. But in order that the exception may not extend itself beyond the need, and may have the least possible effect in weakening reliance on veracity, it ought to be recognised, and, if possible, its limits defined; and if the principle of utility is good for anything, it must be good for weighing these conflicting utilities against one another, and marking out the region within which one or the other preponderates.

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On Duty-Based Ethics – Immanuel Kant

From Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals by Immanuel Kant

Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other talents of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resoluteness, and perseverance as qualities of temperament, are doubtless in many respects good and desirable. But they can become extremely bad and harmful if the will, which is to make use of these gifts of nature and which in its special constitution is called character, is not good. Power, riches, honour, even health, general well-being, and the contentment with one's condition which is called happiness, make for pride and even arrogance if there is not a good will to correct their influence on the mind and on its principles of action so as to make it universally conformable to its end. It need hardly be mentioned that the sight of a being adorned with no feature of a pure and good will, yet enjoying uninterrupted prosperity [i.e. anyone like Faust] can never give pleasure to a rational impartial observer. Thus the good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition even of worthiness to be happy.

[...]

Everything in nature works according to laws.⁷³ Rational beings alone have the faculty of acting according to the conception of laws, that is according to principles, i.e., have a will. Since the deduction of actions from principles requires reason, the will is nothing but practical reason.⁷⁴ If reason infallibly determines the will, then the actions of such a being which are recognized as objectively necessary are subjectively necessary also, i.e., the will is a faculty to choose that only which reason independent of inclination recognizes as

⁷³ A maxim is the subjective principle of volition. The objective principle (i.e., that which would also serve subjectively as a practical principle to all rational beings if reason had full power over the faculty of desire) is the practical law

⁷⁴ It might be here objected to me that I take refuge behind the word respect in an obscure feeling, instead of giving a distinct solution of the question by a concept of the reason. But although respect is a feeling, it is not a feeling received through influence, but is self-wrought by a rational concept, and, therefore, is specifically distinct from all feelings of the former kind, which may be referred either to inclination or fear.

What I recognize immediately as a law for me, I recognize with respect. This merely signifies the consciousness that my will is subordinate to a law, without the intervention of other influences on my sense. The immediate determination of the will by the law, and the consciousness of this, is called respect, so that this is regarded as an effect of the law on the subject, and not as the cause of it. Respect is properly the conception of a worth which thwarts my self-love. Accordingly it is something which is considered neither as an object of inclination nor of fear, although it has something analogous to both. The object of respect is the law only, and that the law which we impose on ourselves and yet recognize as necessary in itself. As a law, we are subjected too it without consulting self-love; as imposed by us on ourselves, it is a result of our will. In the former aspect it has an analogy to fear, in the latter to inclination. Respect for a person is properly only respect for the law (of honesty, etc.) of which he gives us an example. Since we also look on the improvement of our talents as a duty, we consider that we see in a person of talents, as it were, the example of a law (viz., to become like him in this by exercise), and this constitutes our respect. All so-called moral interest consists simply in respect for the law.

practically necessary, i.e., as good. But if reason of itself does not sufficiently determine the will, if the latter is subject also to subjective conditions (particular impulses) which do not always coincide with the objective conditions; in a word, if the will does not in itself completely accord with reason (which is actually the case with men), then the actions which objectively are recognized as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will according to objective laws is obligation, that is to say, the relation of the objective laws to a will that is not thoroughly good is conceived as the determination of the will of a rational being by principles of reason, but which the will from its nature does not of necessity follow.

The conception of an objective principle, in so far as it is obligatory for a will, is called a command (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an Imperative.

All imperatives are expressed by the word ought [or shall], and thereby indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will, which from its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by it (an obligation). They say that something would be good to do or to forbear, but they say it to a will which does not always do a thing because it is conceived to be good to do it. That is practically good, however, which determines the will by means of the conceptions of reason, and consequently not from subjective causes, but objectively, that is on principles which are valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the pleasant, as that which influences the will only by means of sensation from merely subjective causes, valid only for the sense of this or that one, and not as a principle of reason, which holds for everyone.⁷⁵

A perfectly good will would therefore be equally subject to objective laws (viz., laws of good), but could not be conceived as obliged thereby to act lawfully, because of itself from its subjective constitution it can only be determined by the conception of good. Therefore no imperatives hold for the Divine will, or in general for a holy will; ought is here out of place, because the volition is already of itself necessarily in unison with the law.

Therefore imperatives are only formulae to express the relation of objective laws of all

⁷⁵ The dependence of the desires on sensations is called inclination, and this accordingly always indicates a want. The dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason is called an interest. This therefore, is found only in the case of a dependent will which does not always of itself conform to reason; in the Divine will we cannot conceive any interest. But the human will can also take an interest in a thing without therefore acting from interest. The former signifies the practical interest in the action, the latter the pathological in the object of the action. The former indicates only dependence of the will on principles of reason in themselves; the second, dependence on principles of reason for the sake of inclination, reason supplying only the practical rules how the requirement of the inclination may be satisfied. In the first case the action interests me; in the second the object of the action (because it is pleasant to me). We have seen in the first section that in an action done from duty we must look not to the interest in the object, but only to that in the action itself, and in its rational principle (viz., the law).

volition to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, e.g., the human will.

Now all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as means to something else that is willed (or at least which one might possibly will). The categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as necessary of itself without reference to another end, i.e., as objectively necessary.

Since every practical law represents a possible action as good and, on this account, for a subject who is practically determinable by reason, necessary, all imperatives are formulae determining an action which is necessary according to the principle of a will good in some respects. If now the action is good only as a means to something else, then the imperative is hypothetical; if it is conceived as good in itself and consequently as being necessarily the principle of a will which of itself conforms to reason, then it is categorical.

Thus the imperative declares what action possible by me would be good and presents the practical rule in relation to a will which does not forthwith perform an action simply because it is good, whether because the subject does not always know that it is good, or because, even if it know this, yet its maxims might be opposed to the objective principles of practical reason.

Accordingly the hypothetical imperative only says that the action is good for some purpose, possible or actual. In the first case it is a Problematical, in the second an Assertorial practical principle. The categorical imperative which declares an action to be objectively necessary in itself without reference to any purpose, i.e., without any other end, is valid as an Apodictic (practical) principle.

Whatever is possible only by the power of some rational being may also be conceived as a possible purpose of some will; and therefore the principles of action as regards the means necessary to attain some possible purpose are in fact infinitely numerous. All sciences have a practical part, consisting of problems expressing that some end is possible for us and of imperatives directing how it may be attained. These may, therefore, be called in general imperatives of Skill. Here there is no question whether the end is rational and good, but only what one must do in order to attain it. The precepts for the physician to make his patient thoroughly healthy, and for a poisoner to ensure certain death, are of equal value in this respect, that each serves to effect its purpose perfectly. Since in early youth it cannot be known what ends are likely to occur to us in the course of life, parents seek to have their children taught a great many things, and provide for their skill in the use of means for all sorts of arbitrary ends, of none of which can they determine whether

it may not perhaps hereafter be an object to their pupil, but which it is at all events possible that he might aim at; and this anxiety is so great that they commonly neglect to form and correct their judgement on the value of the things which may be chosen as ends.

There is one end, however, which may be assumed to be actually such to all rational beings (so far as imperatives apply to them, viz., as dependent beings), and, therefore, one purpose which they not merely may have, but which we may with certainty assume that they all actually have by a natural necessity, and this is happiness. The hypothetical imperative which expresses the practical necessity of an action as means to the advancement of happiness is Assertorial. We are not to present it as necessary for an uncertain and merely possible purpose, but for a purpose which we may presuppose with certainty and à priori in every man, because it belongs to his being.

Now skill in the choice of means to his own greatest well-being may be called prudence,⁷⁶ in the narrowest sense. And thus the imperative which refers to the choice of means to one's own happiness, i.e., the precept of prudence, is still always hypothetical; the action is not commanded absolutely, but only as means to another purpose.

Finally, there is an imperative which commands a certain conduct immediately, without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it. This imperative is Categorical. It concerns not the matter of the action, or its intended result, but its form and the principle of which it is itself a result; and what is essentially good in it consists in the mental disposition, let the consequence be what it may. This imperative may be called that of Morality.

There is a marked distinction also between the volitions on these three sorts of principles in the dissimilarity of the obligation of the will. In order to mark this difference more clearly, I think they would be most suitably named in their order if we said they are either rules of skill, or counsels of prudence, or commands (laws) of morality. For it is law only that involves the conception of an unconditional and objective necessity, which is consequently universally valid; and commands are laws which must be obeyed, that is, must be followed, even in opposition to inclination. Counsels, indeed, involve necessity,

⁷⁶ The word prudence is taken in two senses: in the one it may bear the name of knowledge of the world, in the other that of private prudence. The former is a man's ability to influence others so as to use them for his own purposes. The latter is the sagacity to combine all these purposes for his own lasting benefit. This latter is properly that to which the value even of the former is reduced, and when a man is prudent in the former sense, but not in the latter, we might better say of him that he is clever and cunning, but, on the whole, imprudent.

but one which can only hold under a contingent subjective condition, viz., they depend on whether this or that man reckons this or that as part of his happiness; the categorical imperative, on the contrary, is not limited by any condition, and as being absolutely, although practically, necessary, may be quite properly called a command. We might also call the first kind of imperatives technical (belonging to art), the second pragmatic⁷⁷ (to welfare), the third moral (belonging to free conduct generally, that is, to morals).

Now arises the question, how are all these imperatives possible? This question does not seek to know how we can conceive the accomplishment of the action which the imperative ordains, but merely how we can conceive the obligation of the will which the imperative expresses. No special explanation is needed to show how an imperative of skill is possible. Whoever wills the end, wills also (so far as reason decides his conduct) the means in his power which are indispensably necessary thereto. This proposition is, as regards the volition, analytical; for, in willing an object as my effect, there is already thought the causality of myself as an acting cause, that is to say, the use of the means; and the imperative educes from the conception of volition of an end the conception of actions necessary to this end. Synthetical propositions must no doubt be employed in defining the means to a proposed end; but they do not concern the principle, the act of the will, but the object and its realization. Ex. gr., that in order to bisect a line on an unerring principle I must draw from its extremities two intersecting arcs; this no doubt is taught by mathematics only in synthetical propositions; but if I know that it is only by this process that the intended operation can be performed, then to say that, if I fully will the operation, I also will the action required for it, is an analytical proposition; for it is one and the same thing to conceive something as an effect which I can produce in a certain way, and to conceive myself as acting in this way.

If it were only equally easy to give a definite conception of happiness, the imperatives of prudence would correspond exactly with those of skill, and would likewise be analytical. For in this case as in that, it could be said: "Whoever wills the end, wills also (according to the dictate of reason necessarily) the indispensable means thereto which are in his power." But, unfortunately, the notion of happiness is so indefinite that although every man wishes to at. it, yet he never can say definitely and consistently what it is that he really wishes and wills.

The reason of this is that all the elements which belong to the notion of happiness are

⁷⁷ It seems to me that the proper signification of the word pragmatic may be most accurately defined in this way. For sanctions are called pragmatic which flow properly not from the law of the states as necessary enactments, but from precaution for the general welfare. A history is composed pragmatically when it teaches prudence, i.e., instructs the world how it can provide for its interests better, or at least as well as, the men of former time.

altogether empirical, i.e., they must be borrowed from experience, and nevertheless the idea of happiness requires an absolute whole, a maximum of welfare in my present and all future circumstances. Now it is impossible that the most clear-sighted and at the same time most powerful being (supposed finite) should frame to himself a definite conception of what he really wills in this. Does he will riches, how much anxiety, envy, and snares might he not thereby draw upon his shoulders? Does he will knowledge and discernment, perhaps it might prove to be only an eye so much the sharper to show him so much the more fearfully the evils that are now concealed from him, and that cannot be avoided, or to impose more wants on his desires, which already give him concern enough. Would he have long life? who guarantees to him that it would not be a long misery? would he at least have health? how often has uneasiness of the body restrained from excesses into which perfect health would have allowed one to fall? and so on. In short, he is unable, on any principle, to determine with certainty what would make him truly happy; because to do so he would need to be omniscient. We cannot therefore act on any definite principles to secure happiness, but only on empirical counsels, ex. gr. of regimen, frugality, courtesy, reserve, etc., which experience teaches do, on the average, most promote well-being. Hence it follows that the imperatives of prudence do not, strictly speaking, command at all, that is, they cannot present actions objectively as practically necessary; that they are rather to be regarded as counsels (*consilia*) than precepts (*praecepta*) of reason, that the problem to determine certainly and universally what action would promote the happiness of a rational being is completely insoluble, and consequently no imperative respecting it is possible which should, in the strict sense, command to do what makes happy; because happiness is not an ideal of reason but of imagination, resting solely on empirical grounds, and it is vain to expect that these should define an action by which one could attain the totality of a series of consequences which is really endless. This imperative of prudence would however be an analytical proposition if we assume that the means to happiness could be certainly assigned; for it is distinguished from the imperative of skill only by this, that in the latter the end is merely possible, in the former it is given; as however both only ordain the means to that which we suppose to be willed as an end, it follows that the imperative which ordains the willing of the means to him who wills the end is in both cases analytical. Thus, there is no difficulty in regard to the possibility of an imperative of this kind either.

On the other hand, the question how the imperative of morality is possible, is undoubtedly one, the only one, demanding a solution, as this is not at all hypothetical, and the objective necessity which it presents cannot rest on any hypothesis, as is the case with the hypothetical imperatives. Only here we must never leave out of consideration that we cannot make out by any example, in other words empirically, whether there is such an imperative at all, but it is rather to be feared that all those which seem to be

categorical may yet be at bottom hypothetical. For instance, when the precept is: "Thou shalt not promise deceitfully"; and it is assumed that the necessity of this is not a mere counsel to avoid some other evil, so that it should mean: "Thou shalt not make a lying promise, lest if it become known thou should destroy your credit," but that an action of this kind must be regarded as evil in itself, so that the imperative of the prohibition is categorical; then we cannot show with certainty in any example that the will was determined merely by the law, without any other spring of action, although it may appear to be so. For it is always possible that fear of disgrace, perhaps also obscure dread of other dangers, may have a secret influence on the will. Who can prove by experience the non-existence of a cause when all that experience tells us is that we do not perceive it? But in such a case the so-called moral imperative, which as such appears to be categorical and unconditional, would in reality be only a pragmatic precept, drawing our attention to our own interests and merely teaching us to take these into consideration.

We shall therefore have to investigate *à priori* the possibility of a categorical imperative, as we have not in this case the advantage of its reality being given in experience, so that [the elucidation of] its possibility should be requisite only for its explanation, not for its establishment. In the meantime it may be discerned beforehand that the categorical imperative alone has the purport of a practical Law: all the rest may indeed be called principles of the will but not laws, since whatever is only necessary for the attainment of some arbitrary purpose may be considered as in itself contingent, and we can at any time be free from the precept if we give up the purpose; on the contrary, the unconditional command leaves the will no liberty to choose the opposite; consequently it alone carries with it that necessity which we require in a law.

Secondly, in the case of this categorical imperative or law of morality, the difficulty (of discerning its possibility) is a very profound one. It is an *à priori* synthetical practical proposition;⁷⁸ and as there is so much difficulty in discerning the possibility of speculative propositions of this kind, it may readily be supposed that the difficulty will be no less with the practical.

In this problem we will first inquire whether the mere conception of a categorical imperative may not perhaps supply us also with the formula of it, containing the proposition which alone can be a categorical imperative; for even if we know the tenor of such an absolute command, yet how it is possible will require further special and

⁷⁸ I connect the act with the will without presupposing any condition resulting from any inclination, but *à priori*, and therefore necessarily (though only objectively, i.e., assuming the idea of a reason possessing full power over all subjective motives). This is accordingly a practical proposition which does not deduce the willing of an action by mere analysis from another already presupposed (for we have not such a perfect will), but connects it immediately with the conception of the will of a rational being, as something not contained in it.

laborious study, which we postpone to the last section.

When I conceive a hypothetical imperative, in general I do not know beforehand what it will contain until I am given the condition. But when I conceive a categorical imperative, I know at once what it contains. For as the imperative contains besides the law only the necessity that the maxims⁷⁹ shall conform to this law, while the law contains no conditions restricting it, there remains nothing but the general statement that the maxim of the action should conform to a universal law, and it is this conformity alone that the imperative properly represents as necessary.

There is therefore but one categorical imperative, namely, this:

Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

Now if all imperatives of duty can be deduced from this one imperative as from their principle, then, although it should remain undecided what is called duty is not merely a vain notion, yet at least we shall be able to show what we understand by it and what this notion means.

Since the universality of the law according to which effects are produced constitutes what is properly called nature in the most general sense (as to form), that is the existence of things so far as it is determined by general laws, the imperative of duty may be expressed thus:

Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a Universal Law of Nature.

We will now enumerate a few duties, adopting the usual division of them into duties to ourselves and ourselves and to others, and into perfect and imperfect duties.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ A Maxim is a subjective principle of action, and must be distinguished from the objective principle, namely, practical law. The former contains the practical rule set by reason according to the conditions of the subject (often its ignorance or its inclinations), so that it is the principle on which the subject acts; but the law is the objective principle valid for every rational being, and is the principle on which it ought to act, that is, an imperative.

⁸⁰ It must be noted here that I reserve the division of duties for a future metaphysic of morals; so that I give it here only as an arbitrary one (in order to arrange my examples). For the rest, I understand by a perfect duty one that admits no exception in favour of inclination and then I have not merely external but also internal perfect duties. This is contrary to the use of the word adopted in the schools; but I do not intend to justify there, as it is all one for my purpose whether it is admitted or not.

A man reduced to despair by a series of misfortunes feels wearied of life, but is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether it would not be contrary to his duty to himself to take his own life. Now he inquires whether the maxim of his action could become a universal law of nature. His maxim is: "From self-love I adopt it as a principle to shorten my life when its longer duration is likely to bring more evil than satisfaction." It is asked then simply whether this principle founded on self-love can become a universal law of nature. Now we see at once that a system of nature of which it should be a law to destroy life by means of the very feeling whose special nature it is to impel to the improvement of life would contradict itself and, therefore, could not exist as a system of nature; hence that maxim cannot possibly exist as a universal law of nature and, consequently, would be wholly inconsistent with the supreme principle of all duty.

Another finds himself forced by necessity to borrow money. He knows that he will not be able to repay it, but sees also that nothing will be lent to him unless he promises stoutly to repay it in a definite time. He desires to make this promise, but he has still so much conscience as to ask himself: "Is it not unlawful and inconsistent with duty to get out of a difficulty in this way?" Suppose however that he resolves to do so: then the maxim of his action would be expressed thus: "When I think myself in want of money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know that I never can do so." Now this principle of self-love or of one's own advantage may perhaps be consistent with my whole future welfare; but the question now is, "Is it right?" I change then the suggestion of self-love into a universal law, and state the question thus: "How would it be if my maxim were a universal law?" Then I see at once that it could never hold as a universal law of nature, but would necessarily contradict itself. For supposing it to be a universal law that everyone when he thinks himself in a difficulty should be able to promise whatever he pleases, with the purpose of not keeping his promise, the promise itself would become impossible, as well as the end that one might have in view in it, since no one would consider that anything was promised to him, but would ridicule all such statements as vain pretenses.

A third finds in himself a talent which with the help of some culture might make him a useful man in many respects. But he finds himself in comfortable circumstances and prefers to indulge in pleasure rather than to take pains in enlarging and improving his happy natural capacities. He asks, however, whether his maxim of neglect of his natural gifts, besides agreeing with his inclination to indulgence, agrees also with what is called duty. He sees then that a system of nature could indeed subsist with such a universal law although men (like the South Sea islanders) should let their talents rest and resolve to devote their lives merely to idleness, amusement, and propagation of their species in a word, to enjoyment; but he cannot possibly will that this should be a universal law of

nature, or be implanted in us as such by a natural instinct. For, as a rational being, he necessarily wills that his faculties be developed, since they serve him and have been given him, for all sorts of possible purposes.

A fourth, who is in prosperity, while he sees that others have to contend with great wretchedness and that he could help them, thinks: "What concern is it of mine? Let everyone be as happy as Heaven pleases, or as he can make himself; I will take nothing from him nor even envy him, only I do not wish to contribute anything to his welfare or to his assistance in distress!" Now no doubt if such a mode of thinking were a universal law, the human race might very well subsist and doubtless even better than in a state in which everyone talks of sympathy and goodwill, or even takes care occasionally to put it into practice, but, on the other side, also cheats when he can, betrays the rights of men, or otherwise violates them. But although it is possible that a universal law of nature might exist in accordance with that maxim, it is impossible to will that such a principle should have the universal validity of a law of nature. For a will which resolved this would contradict itself, inasmuch as many cases might occur in which one would have need of the love and sympathy of others, and in which, by such a law of nature, sprung from his own will, he would deprive himself of all hope of the aid he desires.

These are a few of the many actual duties, or at least what we regard as such, which obviously fall into two classes on the one principle that we have laid down. We must be able to will that a maxim of our action should be a universal law. This is the canon of the moral appreciation of the action generally. Some actions are of such a character that their maxim cannot without contradiction be even conceived as a universal law of nature, far from it being possible that we should will that it should be so. In others this intrinsic impossibility is not found, but still it is impossible to will that their maxim should be raised to the universality of a law of nature, since such a will would contradict itself. It is easily seen that the former violate strict or rigorous (inflexible) duty; the latter only laxer (meritorious) duty. Thus it has been completely shown how all duties depend as regards the nature of the obligation (not the object of the action) on the same principle.

If now we attend to ourselves on occasion of any transgression of duty, we shall find that we in fact do not will that our maxim should be a universal law, for that is impossible for us; on the contrary, we will that the opposite should remain a universal law, only we assume the liberty of making an exception in our own favor or (just for this time only) in favor of our inclination. Consequently if we considered all cases from one and the same point of view, namely, that of reason, we should find a contradiction in our own will, namely, that a certain principle should be objectively necessary as a universal law, and yet subjectively should not be universal, but admit of exceptions. As however we at one

moment regard our action from the point of view of a will wholly conformed to reason, and then again look at the same action from the point of view of a will affected by inclination, there is not really any contradiction, but an antagonism of inclination to the precept of reason, whereby the universality of the principle (*universalitas*) is changed into a mere generality, so that the practical principle of reason shall meet the maxim half way. Now, although this cannot be justified in our own impartial judgement, yet it proves that we do really recognize the validity of the categorical imperative and (with all respect for it) only allow ourselves a few exceptions, which we think unimportant and forced from us.

We have thus established at least this much, that if duty is a conception which is to have any import and real legislative authority for our actions, it can only be expressed in categorical and not at all in hypothetical imperatives. We have also, which is of great importance, exhibited clearly and definitely for every practical application the content of the categorical imperative, which must contain the principle of all duty if there is such a thing at all. We have not yet, however, advanced so far as to prove *à priori* that there actually is such an imperative, that there is a practical law which commands absolutely of itself and without any other impulse, and that the following of this law is duty.

With the view of attaining to this, it is of extreme importance to remember that we must not allow ourselves to think of deducing the reality of this principle from the particular attributes of human nature. For duty is to be a practical, unconditional necessity of action; it must therefore hold for all rational beings (to whom an imperative can apply at all), and for this reason only be also a law for all human wills. On the contrary, whatever is deduced from the particular natural characteristics of humanity, from certain feelings and propensions, nay, even, if possible, from any particular tendency proper to human reason, and which need not necessarily hold for the will of every rational being; this may indeed supply us with a maxim, but not with a law; with a subjective principle on which we may have a propension and inclination to act, but not with an objective principle on which we should be enjoined to act, even though all our propensions, inclinations, and natural dispositions were opposed to it. In fact, the sublimity and intrinsic dignity of the command in duty are so much the more evident, the less the subjective impulses favor it and the more they oppose it, without being able in the slightest degree to weaken the obligation of the law or to diminish its validity.

Here then we see philosophy brought to a critical position, since it has to be firmly fixed, notwithstanding that it has nothing to support it in heaven or earth. Here it must show its purity as absolute director of its own laws, not the herald of those which are whispered to it by an implanted sense or who knows what tutelary nature. Although these may be better than nothing, yet they can never afford principles dictated by reason, which must

have their source wholly à priori and thence their commanding authority, expecting everything from the supremacy of the law and the due respect for it, nothing from inclination, or else condemning the man to self-contempt and inward abhorrence.

Thus every empirical element is not only quite incapable of being an aid to the principle of morality, but is even highly prejudicial to the purity of morals, for the proper and inestimable worth of an absolutely good will consists just in this, that the principle of action is free from all influence of contingent grounds, which alone experience can furnish. We cannot too much or too often repeat our warning against this lax and even mean habit of thought which seeks for its principle amongst empirical motives and laws; for human reason in its weariness is glad to rest on this pillow, and in a dream of sweet illusions (in which, instead of Juno, it embraces a cloud) it substitutes for morality a bastard patched up from limbs of various derivation, which looks like anything one chooses to see in it, only not like virtue to one who has once beheld her in her true form.⁸¹

The question then is this: “Is it a necessary law for all rational beings that they should always judge of their actions by maxims of which they can themselves will that they should serve as universal laws?” If it is so, then it must be connected (altogether à priori) with the very conception of the will of a rational being generally. But in order to discover this connexion we must, however reluctantly, take a step into metaphysic, although into a domain of it which is distinct from speculative philosophy, namely, the metaphysic of morals. In a practical philosophy, where it is not the reasons of what happens that we have to ascertain, but the laws of what ought to happen, even although it never does, i.e., objective practical laws, there it is not necessary to inquire into the reasons why anything pleases or displeases, how the pleasure of mere sensation differs from taste, and whether the latter is distinct from a general satisfaction of reason; on what the feeling of pleasure or pain rests, and how from it desires and inclinations arise, and from these again maxims by the co-operation of reason: for all this belongs to an empirical psychology, which would constitute the second part of physics, if we regard physics as the philosophy of nature, so far as it is based on empirical laws. But here we are concerned with objective practical laws and, consequently, with the relation of the will to itself so far as it is determined by reason alone, in which case whatever has reference to anything empirical is necessarily excluded; since if reason of itself alone determines the conduct (and it is the possibility of this that we are now investigating), it must necessarily

⁸¹ To behold virtue in her proper form is nothing else but to contemplate morality stripped of all admixture of sensible things and of every spurious ornament of reward or self-love. How much she then eclipses everything else that appears charming to the affections, every one may readily perceive with the least exertion of his reason, if it be not wholly spoiled for abstraction.

do so a priori.

The will is conceived as a faculty of determining oneself to action in accordance with the conception of certain laws. And such a faculty can be found only in rational beings. Now that which serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is the end, and, if this is assigned by reason alone, it must hold for all rational beings. On the other hand, that which merely contains the ground of possibility of the action of which the effect is the end, this is called the means. The subjective ground of the desire is the spring, the objective ground of the volition is the motive; hence the distinction between subjective ends which rest on springs, and objective ends which depend on motives valid for every rational being. Practical principles are formal when they abstract from all subjective ends; they are material when they assume these, and therefore particular springs of action. The ends which a rational being proposes to himself at pleasure as effects of his actions (material ends) are all only relative, for it is only their relation to the particular desires of the subject that gives them their worth, which therefore cannot furnish principles universal and necessary for all rational beings and for every volition, that is to say practical laws. Hence all these relative ends can give rise only to hypothetical imperatives. Supposing, however, that there were something whose existence has in itself an absolute worth, something which, being an end in itself, could be a source of definite laws; then in this and this alone would lie the source of a possible categorical imperative, i.e., a practical law.

Now I say:

man and generally any rational being exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all his actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings, must be always regarded at the same time as an end.

All objects of the inclinations have only a conditional worth, for if the inclinations and the wants founded on them did not exist, then their object would be without value. But the inclinations, themselves being sources of want, are so far from having an absolute worth for which they should be desired that on the contrary it must be the universal wish of every rational being to be wholly free from them. Thus the worth of any object which is to be acquired by our action is always conditional. Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature's, have nevertheless, if they are irrational beings, only a relative value as means, and are therefore called things; rational beings, on the contrary, are called persons, because their very nature points them out as ends in themselves, that is as something which must not be used merely as means, and so far therefore restricts

freedom of action (and is an object of respect). These, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence has a worth for us as an effect of our action, but objective ends, that is, things whose existence is an end in itself; an end moreover for which no other can be substituted, which they should subserve merely as means, for otherwise nothing whatever would possess absolute worth; but if all worth were conditioned and therefore contingent, then there would be no supreme practical principle of reason whatever.

If then there is a supreme practical principle or, in respect of the human will, a categorical imperative, it must be one which, being drawn from the conception of that which is necessarily an end for everyone because it is an end in itself, constitutes an objective principle of will, and can therefore serve as a universal practical law.

The foundation of this principle is:

rational nature exists as an end in itself.

Man necessarily conceives his own existence as being so; so far then this is a subjective principle of human actions. But every other rational being regards its existence similarly, just on the same rational principle that holds for me:⁸² so that it is at the same time an objective principle, from which as a supreme practical law all laws of the will must be capable of being deduced. Accordingly the practical imperative will be as follows:

So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only.

We will now inquire whether this can be practically carried out.

To abide by the previous examples:

1. Firstly, under the head of necessary duty to oneself: He who contemplates suicide should ask himself whether his action can be consistent with the idea of humanity as an end in itself. If he destroys himself in order to escape from painful circumstances, he uses a person merely as a mean to maintain a tolerable condition up to the end of life. But a man is not a thing, that is to say, something which can be used merely as means, but must in all his actions be always considered as an end in himself. I cannot, therefore, dispose in any way of a man in my own person so as to mutilate him, to damage or kill him.

⁸² This proposition is here stated as a postulate. The grounds of it will be found in the concluding section.

(It belongs to ethics proper to define this principle more precisely, so as to avoid all misunderstanding, e.g., as to the amputation of the limbs in order to preserve myself, as to exposing my life to danger with a view to preserve it, etc. This question is therefore omitted here.)

2. Secondly, as regards necessary duties, or those of strict obligation, towards others: He who is thinking of making a lying promise to others will see at once that he would be using another man merely as a mean, without the latter containing at the same time the end in himself. For he whom I propose by such a promise to use for my own purposes cannot possibly assent to my mode of acting towards him and, therefore, cannot himself contain the end of this action. This violation of the principle of humanity in other men is more obvious if we take in examples of attacks on the freedom and property of others. For then it is clear that he who transgresses the rights of men intends to use the person of others merely as a means, without considering that as rational beings they ought always to be esteemed also as ends, that is, as beings who must be capable of containing in themselves the end of the very same action.⁸³
3. Thirdly, as regards contingent (meritorious) duties to oneself: It is not enough that the action does not violate humanity in our own person as an end in itself, it must also harmonize with it. Now there are in humanity capacities of greater perfection, which belong to the end that nature has in view in regard to humanity in ourselves as the subject: to neglect these might perhaps be consistent with the maintenance of humanity as an end in itself, but not with the advancement of this end.
4. Fourthly, as regards meritorious duties towards others: The natural end which all men have is their own happiness. Now humanity might indeed subsist, although no one should contribute anything to the happiness of others, provided he did not intentionally withdraw anything from it; but after all this would only harmonize negatively not positively with humanity as an end in itself, if everyone does not also endeavor, as far as in him lies, to forward the ends of others. For the ends of any subject which is an end in himself ought as

⁸³ Let it not be thought that the common "quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.," could serve here as the rule or principle. For it is only a deduction from the former, though with several limitations; it cannot be a universal law, for it does not contain the principle of duties to oneself, nor of the duties of benevolence to others (for many a one would gladly consent that others should not benefit him, provided only that he might be excused from showing benevolence to them), nor finally that of duties of strict obligation to one another, for on this principle the criminal might argue against the judge who punishes him, and so on.

far as possible to be my ends also, if that conception is to have its full effect with me.

This principle, that humanity and generally every rational nature is an end in itself (which is the supreme limiting condition of every man's freedom of action), is not borrowed from experience, firstly, because it is universal, applying as it does to all rational beings whatever, and experience is not capable of determining anything about them; secondly, because it does not present humanity as an end to men (subjectively), that is as an object which men do of themselves actually adopt as an end; but as an objective end, which must as a law constitute the supreme limiting condition of all our subjective ends, let them be what we will; it must therefore spring from pure reason. In fact the objective principle of all practical legislation lies (according to the first principle) in the rule and its form of universality which makes it capable of being a law (say, e.g., a law of nature); but the subjective principle is in the end; now by the second principle the subject of all ends is each rational being, inasmuch as it is an end in itself. Hence follows the third practical principle of the will, which is the ultimate condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, viz.:

the idea of the will of every rational being as a universally legislative will.

On this principle all maxims are rejected which are inconsistent with the will being itself universal legislator. Thus the will is not subject simply to the law, but so subject that it must be regarded as itself giving the law and, on this ground only, subject to the law (of which it can regard itself as the author).

In the previous imperatives, namely, that based on the conception of the conformity of actions to general laws, as in a physical system of nature, and that based on the universal prerogative of rational beings as ends in themselves these imperatives, just because they were conceived as categorical, excluded from any share in their authority all admixture of any interest as a spring of action; they were, however, only assumed to be categorical, because such an assumption was necessary to explain the conception of duty. But we could not prove independently that there are practical propositions which command categorically, nor can it be proved in this section; one thing, however, could be done, namely, to indicate in the imperative itself, by some determinate expression, that in the case of volition from duty all interest is renounced, which is the specific criterion of categorical as distinguished from hypothetical imperatives. This is done in the present (third) formula of the principle, namely, in the idea of the will of every rational being as a universally legislating will.

For although a will which is subject to laws may be attached to this law by means of an interest, yet a will which is itself a supreme lawgiver so far as it is such cannot possibly depend on any interest, since a will so dependent would itself still need another law restricting the interest of its self-love by the condition that it should be valid as universal law.

Thus the principle that every human will is a will which in all its maxims gives universal laws,⁸⁴ provided it be otherwise justified, would be very well adapted to be the categorical imperative, in this respect, namely, that just because of the idea of universal legislation it is not based on interest, and therefore it alone among all possible imperatives can be unconditional. Or still better, converting the proposition, if there is a categorical imperative (i.e., a law for the will of every rational being), it can only command that everything be done from maxims of one's will regarded as a will which could at the same time will that it should itself give universal laws, for in that case only the practical principle and the imperative which it obeys are unconditional, since they cannot be based on any interest.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbot (University of Adelaide, 2014).

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⁸⁴ I may be excused from adducing examples to elucidate this principle, as those which have already been used to elucidate the categorical imperative and its formula would all serve for the like purpose here.

Chapter 5: Political Philosophy

What is justice?

How should we organize ourselves?

If ethics is the study of applied value, we can say that politics is the study of applied value at scale. Within politics, we want to know what justice looks like in society. Some questions that naturally arise from this endeavour are:

- How does justice demand we organize ourselves?
- What should the dominant organizational principle be?
- Perhaps we give all of our rights to the state in return for protection. Perhaps we only lease certain rights to the state so long as it governs as we desire.
- How do we protect the minority from the mob?
- How should distribute resources?
- Is capital accumulation a good thing in and of itself?
- How do we reckon with past injustices that impact the present distribution of power and resources?
- And so on.

After a stop in Athens concerning society as a necessary evil, we will focus upon social contract theory, from Rousseau to Rawls. From there, we explore notions of distributive justice, which will turn into a look at anarchism and fascism. After that discussion, we look at imagining out futures and reckoning with our pasts.

On Society as a Necessary Evil – Plato

From *The Republic* by Plato

I am delighted, he replied, to hear you say so, and shall begin by speaking, as I proposed, of the nature and origin of justice. They say that to do injustice is, by nature, good; to suffer injustice, evil; but that the evil is greater than the good. And so, when men have both done and suffered injustice and have had experience of both, not being able to avoid

the one and obtain the other, they think that they had better agree among themselves to have neither; hence there arise laws and mutual covenants; and that which is ordained by law is termed by them lawful and just. This they affirm to be the origin and nature of justice; —it is a mean or compromise, between the best of all, which is to do injustice and not be punished, and the worst of all, which is to suffer injustice without the power of retaliation; and justice, being at a middle point between the two, is tolerated not as a good, but as the lesser evil, and by reason of the inability of men to do injustice. For no man who is worthy to be called a man would ever submit to such an agreement if he were able to resist; he would be mad if he did. Such is the received account, Socrates, of the nature and origin of justice.

Now that those who practice justice do so involuntarily and because they have not the power to be unjust will best appear if we imagine something of this kind: having given both to the just and the unjust power to do what they will, let us watch and see whither desire will lead them; then we shall discover in the very act the just and unjust man to be proceeding along the same road, following their interest, which all natures deem to be their good, and are only diverted into the path of justice by the force of law. The liberty which we are supposing may be most completely given to them in the form of such a power as is said to have been possessed by Gyges the ancestor of Croesus the Lydian.

According to the tradition, Gyges was a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia; there was a great storm, and an earthquake made an opening in the earth at the place where he was feeding his flock. Amazed at the sight, he descended into the opening, where, among other marvels, he beheld a hollow brazen horse, having doors, at which he stooping and looking in saw a dead body of stature, as appeared to him, more than human, and having nothing on but a gold ring; this he took from the finger of the dead and reascended.

Now the shepherds met together, according to custom, that they might send their monthly report about the flocks to the king; into their assembly he came having the ring on his finger, and as he was sitting among them he chanced to turn the collet of the ring inside his hand, when instantly he became invisible to the rest of the company and they began to speak of him as if he were no longer present. He was astonished at this, and again touching the ring he turned the collet outwards and reappeared; he made several trials of the ring, and always with the same result—when he turned the collet inwards he became invisible, when outwards he reappeared. Whereupon he contrived to be chosen one of the messengers who were sent to the court; where as soon as he arrived he seduced the queen, and with her help conspired against the king and slew him, and took the kingdom.

Suppose now that there were two such magic rings, and the just put on one of them and

the unjust the other. No man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he would, and in all respects be like a God among men.

Then the actions of the just would be as the actions of the unjust; they would both come at last to the same point. And this we may truly affirm to be a great proof that a man is just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity, for wherever anyone thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust. For all men believe in their hearts that injustice is far more profitable to the individual than justice, and he who argues as I have been supposing, will say that they are right. If you could imagine any one obtaining this power of becoming invisible, and never doing any wrong or touching what was another's, he would be thought by the lookers-on to be a most wretched idiot, although they would praise him to one another's faces, and keep up appearances with one another from a fear that they too might suffer injustice. Enough of this. Now, if we are to form a real judgment of the life of the just and unjust, we must isolate them; there is no other way; and how is the isolation to be affected?

I answer: Let the unjust man be entirely unjust, and the just man entirely just; nothing is to be taken away from either of them, and both are to be perfectly furnished for the work of their respective lives. First, let the unjust be like other distinguished masters of craft; like the skilful pilot or physician, who knows intuitively his own powers and keeps within their limits, and who, if he fails at any point, is able to recover himself. So, let the unjust make his unjust attempts in the right way, and lie hidden if he means to be great in his injustice (he who is found out is nobody): for the highest reach of injustice is: to be deemed just when you are not. Therefore, I say that in the perfectly unjust man we must assume the most perfect injustice; there is to be no deduction, but we must allow him, while doing the most unjust acts, to have acquired the greatest reputation for justice. If he have taken a false step he must be able to recover himself; he must be one who can speak with effect, if any of his deeds come to light, and who can force his way where force is required his courage and strength, and command of money and friends.

And at his side let us place the just man in his nobleness and simplicity, wishing, as Aeschylus says, to be and not to seem good. There must be no seeming, for if he seem to be just he will be honoured and rewarded, and then we shall not know whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of honours and rewards; therefore, let him be clothed in justice only, and have no other covering; and he must be imagined in a state of life the opposite of the former. Let him be the best of men, and let him be thought the

worst; then he will have been put to the proof; and we shall see whether he will be affected by the fear of infamy and its consequences. And let him continue thus to the hour of death; being just and seeming to be unjust.

When both have reached the uttermost extreme, the one of justice and the other of injustice, let judgment be given which of them is the happier of the two.

Citation and Use

The text was taken from the following work.

Archie and Archie, *Reading for Philosophical Inquiry: A Brief Introduction to Philosophical Thinking*.

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On the Origin of our Chains – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

From Chapter 1 of *The Social Contract* by Rousseau

Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they. How did this change come about? I do not know. What can make it legitimate? That question I think I can answer.

If I took into account only force, and the effects derived from it, I should say: "As long as a people is compelled to obey, and obeys, it does well; as soon as it can shake off the yoke, and shakes it off, it does still better; for, regaining its liberty by the same right as took it away, either it is justified in resuming it, or there was no justification for those who took it away." But the social order is a sacred right which is the basis of all other rights. Nevertheless, this right does not come from nature, and must therefore be founded on conventions. Before coming to that, I have to prove what I have just asserted.

The First Societies

The most ancient of all societies, and the only one that is natural is the family: and even so the children remain attached to the father only so long as they need him for their preservation. As soon as this need ceases, the natural bond is dissolved. The children, released from the obedience they owed to the father, and the father, released from the

care he owed his children, return equally to independence. If they remain united, they continue so no longer naturally, but voluntarily; and the family itself is then maintained only by convention.

This common liberty results from the nature of man. His first law is to provide for his own preservation, his first cares are those which he owes to himself; and, as soon as he reaches years of discretion, he is the sole judge of the proper means of preserving himself, and consequently becomes his own master.

The family then may be called the first model of political societies: the ruler corresponds to the father, and the people to the children; and all, being born free and equal, alienate their liberty only for their own advantage. The whole difference is that, in the family, the love of the father for his children repays him for the care he takes of them, while, in the State, the pleasure of commanding takes the place of the love which the chief cannot have for the peoples under him.

Grotius denies that all human power is established in favour of the governed, and quotes slavery as an example. His usual method of reasoning is constantly to establish right by fact.⁸⁵ It would be possible to employ a more logical method, but none could be more favourable to tyrants.

It is then, according to Grotius, doubtful whether the human race belongs to a hundred men, or that hundred men to the human race: and, throughout his book, he seems to incline to the former alternative, which is also the view of Hobbes. On this showing, the human species is divided into so many herds of cattle, each with its ruler, who keeps guard over them for the purpose of devouring them.

As a shepherd is of a nature superior to that of his flock, the shepherds of men, *i.e.* their rulers, are of a nature superior to that of the peoples under them. Thus, Philo tells us, the Emperor Caligula reasoned, concluding equally well either that kings were gods, or that men were beasts.

The reasoning of Caligula agrees with that of Hobbes and Grotius. Aristotle, before any of them, had said that men are by no means equal naturally, but that some are born for

⁸⁵ "Learned inquiries into public right are often only the history of past abuses; and troubling to study them too deeply is a profitless infatuation" (*Essay on the Interests of France in Relation to its Neighbours*, by the Marquis d'Argenson). This is exactly what Grotius has done.

slavery, and others for dominion.

Aristotle was right; but he took the effect for the cause. Nothing can be more certain than that every man born in slavery is born for slavery. Slaves lose everything in their chains, even the desire of escaping from them: they love their servitude, as the comrades of Ulysses loved their brutish condition.⁸⁶ If then there are slaves by nature, it is because there have been slaves against nature. Force made the first slaves, and their cowardice perpetuated the condition.

I have said nothing of King Adam, or Emperor Noah, father of the three great monarchs who shared out the universe, like the children of Saturn, whom some scholars have recognised in them. I trust to getting due thanks for my moderation; for, being a direct descendant of one of these princes, perhaps of the eldest branch, how do I know that a verification of titles might not leave me the legitimate king of the human race? In any case, there can be no doubt that Adam was sovereign of the world, as Robinson Crusoe was of his island, as long as he was its only inhabitant; and this empire had the advantage that the monarch, safe on his throne, had no rebellions, wars, or conspirators to fear.

The Right of the Strongest

The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty. Hence the right of the strongest, which, though to all seeming meant ironically, is really laid down as a fundamental principle. But are we never to have an explanation of this phrase? Force is a physical power, and I fail to see what moral effect it can have. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will—at the most, an act of prudence. In what sense can it be a duty?

Suppose for a moment that this so-called "right" exists. I maintain that the sole result is a mass of inexplicable nonsense. For, if force creates right, the effect changes with the cause: every force that is greater than the first succeeds to its right. As soon as it is possible to disobey with impunity, disobedience is legitimate; and, the strongest being always in the right, the only thing that matters is to act so as to become the strongest. But what kind of right is that which perishes when force fails? If we must obey perforce, there is no need to obey because we ought; and if we are not forced to obey, we are under no obligation to do so. Clearly, the word "right" adds nothing to force: in this connection, it means absolutely nothing.

⁸⁶ See a short treatise of Plutarch's entitled "That Animals Reason."

Obey the powers that be. If this means yield to force, it is a good precept, but superfluous: I can answer for its never being violated. All power comes from God, I admit; but so does all sickness: does that mean that we are forbidden to call in the doctor? A brigand surprises me at the edge of a wood: must I not merely surrender my purse on compulsion; but, even if I could withhold it, am I in conscience bound to give it up? For certainly the pistol he holds is also a power.

Let us then admit that force does not create right, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers. In that case, my original question recurs.

Slavery

Since no man has a natural authority over his fellow, and force creates no right, we must conclude that conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men.

If an individual, says Grotius, can alienate his liberty and make himself the slave of a master, why could not a whole people do the same and make itself subject to a king? There are in this passage plenty of ambiguous words which would need explaining; but let us confine ourselves to the word *alienate*. To alienate is to give or to sell. Now, a man who becomes the slave of another does not give himself; he sells himself, at the least for his subsistence: but for what does a people sell itself? A king is so far from furnishing his subjects with their subsistence that he gets his own only from them; and, according to Rabelais, kings do not live on nothing. Do subjects then give their persons on condition that the king takes their goods also? I fail to see what they have left to preserve.

It will be said that the despot assures his subjects civil tranquillity. Granted; but what do they gain, if the wars his ambition brings down upon them, his insatiable avidity, and the vexatious conduct of his ministers press harder on them than their own dissensions would have done? What do they gain, if the very tranquillity they enjoy is one of their miseries? Tranquillity is found also in dungeons; but is that enough to make them desirable places to live in? The Greeks imprisoned in the cave of the Cyclops lived there very tranquilly, while they were awaiting their turn to be devoured.

To say that a man gives himself gratuitously, is to say what is absurd and inconceivable; such an act is null and illegitimate, from the mere fact that he who does it is out of his mind. To say the same of a whole people is to suppose a people of madmen; and madness creates no right.

Even if each man could alienate himself, he could not alienate his children: they are born men and free; their liberty belongs to them, and no one but they has the right to dispose

of it. Before they come to years of discretion, the father can, in their name, lay down conditions for their preservation and well-being, but he cannot give them, irrevocably and without conditions: such a gift is contrary to the ends of nature, and exceeds the rights of paternity. It would therefore be necessary, in order to legitimise an arbitrary government, that in every generation the people should be in a position to accept or reject it; but, were this so, the government would be no longer arbitrary.

To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties. For him who renounces everything no indemnity is possible. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; to remove all liberty from his will is to remove all morality from his acts. Finally, it is an empty and contradictory convention that sets up, on the one side, absolute authority, and, on the other, unlimited obedience. Is it not clear that we can be under no obligation to a person from whom we have the right to exact everything? Does not this condition alone, in the absence of equivalence or exchange, in itself involve the nullity of the act? For what right can my slave have against me, when all that he has belongs to me, and, his right being mine, this right of mine against myself is a phrase devoid of meaning?

Grotius and the rest find in war another origin for the so-called right of slavery. The victor having, as they hold, the right of killing the vanquished, the latter can buy back his life at the price of his liberty; and this convention is the more legitimate because it is to the advantage of both parties.

But it is clear that this supposed right to kill the conquered is by no means deducible from the state of war. Men, from the mere fact that, while they are living in their primitive independence, they have no mutual relations stable enough to constitute either the state of peace or the state of war, cannot be naturally enemies. War is constituted by a relation between things, and not between persons; and, as the state of war cannot arise out of simple personal relations, but only out of real relations, private war, or war of man with man, can exist neither in the state of nature, where there is no constant property, nor in the social state, where everything is under the authority of the laws.

Individual combats, duels and encounters, are acts which cannot constitute a state; while the private wars, authorised by the Establishments of Louis IX, King of France, and suspended by the Peace of God, are abuses of feudalism, in itself an absurd system if ever there was one, and contrary to the principles of natural right and to all good polity.

War then is a relation, not between man and man, but between State and State, and

individuals are enemies only accidentally, not as men, nor even as citizens,⁸⁷ but as soldiers; not as members of their country, but as its defenders. Finally, each State can have for enemies only other States, and not men; for between things disparate in nature there can be no real relation.

Furthermore, this principle is in conformity with the established rules of all times and the constant practice of all civilised peoples. Declarations of war are intimations less to powers than to their subjects. The foreigner, whether king, individual, or people, who robs, kills or detains the subjects, without declaring war on the prince, is not an enemy, but a brigand. Even in real war, a just prince, while laying hands, in the enemy's country, on all that belongs to the public, respects the lives and goods of individuals: he respects rights on which his own are founded. The object of the war being the destruction of the hostile State, the other side has a right to kill its defenders, while they are bearing arms; but as soon as they lay them down and surrender, they cease to be enemies or instruments of the enemy, and become once more merely men, whose life no one has any right to take. Sometimes it is possible to kill the State without killing a single one of its members; and war gives no right which is not necessary to the gaining of its object. These principles are not those of Grotius: they are not based on the authority of poets, but derived from the nature of reality and based on reason.

The right of conquest has no foundation other than the right of the strongest. If war does not give the conqueror the right to massacre the conquered peoples, the right to enslave them cannot be based upon a right which does not exist. No one has a right to kill an enemy except when he cannot make him a slave, and the right to enslave him cannot therefore be derived from the right to kill him. It is accordingly an unfair exchange to make him buy at the price of his liberty his life, over which the victor holds no right. Is it not clear that there is a vicious circle in founding the right of life and death on the right of slavery, and the right of slavery on the right of life and death?

Even if we assume this terrible right to kill everybody, I maintain that a slave made in war, or a conquered people, is under no obligation to a master, except to obey him as far as he is compelled to do so. By taking an equivalent for his life, the victor has not done him a

⁸⁷ The Romans, who understood and respected the right of war more than any other nation on earth, carried their scruples on this head so far that a citizen was not allowed to serve as a volunteer without engaging himself expressly against the enemy, and against such and such an enemy by name. A legion in which the younger Cato was seeing his first service under Popilius having been reconstructed, the elder Cato wrote to Popilius that, if he wished his son to continue serving under him, he must administer to him a new military oath, because, the first having been annulled, he was no longer able to bear arms against the enemy. The same Cato wrote to his son telling him to take great care not to go into battle before taking this new oath. I know that the siege of Clusium and other isolated events can be quoted against me; but I am citing laws and customs. The Romans are the people that least often transgressed its laws; and no other people has had such good ones.

favour; instead of killing him without profit, he has killed him usefully. So far then is he from acquiring over him any authority in addition to that of force, that the state of war continues to subsist between them: their mutual relation is the effect of it, and the usage of the right of war does not imply a treaty of peace. A convention has indeed been made; but this convention, so far from destroying the state of war, presupposes its continuance.

So, from whatever aspect we regard the question, the right of slavery is null and void, not only as being illegitimate, but also because it is absurd and meaningless. The words *slave* and *right* contradict each other, and are mutually exclusive. It will always be equally foolish for a man to say to a man or to a people: "I make with you a convention wholly at your expense and wholly to my advantage; I shall keep it as long as I like, and you will keep it as long as I like."

That We Must Always Go Back To A First Convention

Even if I granted all that I have been refuting, the friends of despotism would be no better off. There will always be a great difference between subduing a multitude and ruling a society. Even if scattered individuals were successively enslaved by one man, however numerous they might be, I still see no more than a master and his slaves, and certainly not a people and its ruler; I see what may be termed an aggregation, but not an association; there is as yet neither public good nor body politic. The man in question, even if he has enslaved half the world, is still only an individual; his interest, apart from that of others, is still a purely private interest. If this same man comes to die, his empire, after him, remains scattered and without unity, as an oak falls and dissolves into a heap of ashes when the fire has consumed it.

A people, says Grotius, can give itself to a king. Then, according to Grotius, a people is a people before it gives itself. The gift is itself a civil act, and implies public deliberation. It would be better, before examining the act by which a people gives itself to a king, to examine that by which it has become a people; for this act, being necessarily prior to the other, is the true foundation of society.

Indeed, if there were no prior convention, where, unless the election were unanimous, would be the obligation on the minority to submit to the choice of the majority? How have a hundred men who wish for a master the right to vote on behalf of ten who do not? The law of majority voting is itself something established by convention, and presupposes unanimity, on one occasion at least.

The Social Compact

I suppose men to have reached the point at which the obstacles in the way of their preservation in the state of nature show their power of resistance to be greater than the resources at the disposal of each individual for his maintenance in that state. That primitive condition can then subsist no longer; and the human race would perish unless it changed its manner of existence.

But, as men cannot engender new forces, but only unite and direct existing ones, they have no other means of preserving themselves than the formation, by aggregation, of a sum of forces great enough to overcome the resistance. These they have to bring into play by means of a single motive power, and cause to act in concert.

This sum of forces can arise only where several persons come together: but, as the force and liberty of each man are the chief instruments of his self-preservation, how can he pledge them without harming his own interests, and neglecting the care he owes to himself? This difficulty, in its bearing on my present subject, may be stated in the following terms—

"The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before." This is the fundamental problem of which the *Social Contract* provides the solution.

The clauses of this contract are so determined by the nature of the act that the slightest modification would make them vain and ineffective; so that, although they have perhaps never been formally set forth, they are everywhere the same and everywhere tacitly admitted and recognised, until, on the violation of the social compact, each regains his original rights and resumes his natural liberty, while losing the conventional liberty in favour of which he renounced it.

These clauses, properly understood, may be reduced to one—the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others.

Moreover, the alienation being without reserve, the union is as perfect as it can be, and no associate has anything more to demand: for, if the individuals retained certain rights, as there would be no common superior to decide between them and the public, each, being on one point his own judge, would ask to be so on all; the state of nature would thus continue, and the association would necessarily become inoperative or tyrannical.

Finally, each man, in giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody; and as there is no associate over whom he does not acquire the same right as he yields others over himself, he gains an equivalent for everything he loses, and an increase of force for the preservation of what he has.

If then we discard from the social compact what is not of its essence, we shall find that it reduces itself to the following terms—

"Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole."

At once, in place of the individual personality of each contracting party, this act of association creates a moral and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly contains votes, and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will. This public person, so formed by the union of all other persons, formerly took the name of *city*,⁸⁸ and now takes that of *Republic* or *body politic*; it is called by its members *State* when passive, *Sovereign* when active, and *Power* when compared with others like itself. Those who are associated in it take collectively the name of *people*, and severally are called *citizens*, as sharing in the sovereign power, and *subjects*, as being under the laws of the State. But these terms are often confused and taken one for another: it is enough to know how to distinguish them when they are being used with precision.

The Sovereign

This formula shows us that the act of association comprises a mutual undertaking between the public and the individuals, and that each individual, in making a contract, as we may say, with himself, is bound in a double capacity; as a member of the Sovereign he is bound to the individuals, and as a member of the State to the Sovereign. But the maxim of civil right, that no one is bound by undertakings made to himself, does not apply in this case; for there is a great difference between incurring an obligation to yourself and

⁸⁸ The real meaning of this word has been almost wholly lost in modern times; most people mistake a town for a city, and a townsman for a citizen. They do not know that houses make a town, but citizens a city. The same mistake long ago cost the Carthaginians dear. I have never read of the title of citizens being given to the subjects of any prince, not even the ancient Macedonians or the English of to-day, though they are nearer liberty than any one else. The French alone everywhere familiarly adopt the name of citizens, because, as can be seen from their dictionaries, they have no idea of its meaning; otherwise they would be guilty in usurping it, of the crime of *lèse-majesté*: among them, the name expresses a virtue, and not a right. When Bodin spoke of our citizens and townsmen, he fell into a bad blunder in taking the one class for the other. M. d'Alembert has avoided the error, and, in his article on Geneva, has clearly distinguished the four orders of men (or even five, counting mere foreigners) who dwell in our town, of which two only compose the Republic. No other French writer, to my knowledge, has understood the real meaning of the word citizen.

incurring one to a whole of which you form a part.

Attention must further be called to the fact that public deliberation, while competent to bind all the subjects to the Sovereign, because of the two different capacities in which each of them may be regarded, cannot, for the opposite reason, bind the Sovereign to itself; and that it is consequently against the nature of the body politic for the Sovereign to impose on itself a law which it cannot infringe. Being able to regard itself in only one capacity, it is in the position of an individual who makes a contract with himself; and this makes it clear that there neither is nor can be any kind of fundamental law binding on the body of the people—not even the social contract itself. This does not mean that the body politic cannot enter into undertakings with others, provided the contract is not infringed by them; for in relation to what is external to it, it becomes a simple being, an individual.

But the body politic or the Sovereign, drawing its being wholly from the sanctity of the contract, can never bind itself, even to an outsider, to do anything derogatory to the original act, for instance, to alienate any part of itself, or to submit to another Sovereign. Violation of the act by which it exists would be self-annihilation; and that which is itself nothing can create nothing.

As soon as this multitude is so united in one body, it is impossible to offend against one of the members without attacking the body, and still more to offend against the body without the members resenting it. Duty and interest therefore equally oblige the two contracting parties to give each other help; and the same men should seek to combine, in their double capacity, all the advantages dependent upon that capacity.

Again, the Sovereign, being formed wholly of the individuals who compose it, neither has nor can have any interest contrary to theirs; and consequently the sovereign power need give no guarantee to its subjects, because it is impossible for the body to wish to hurt all its members. We shall also see later on that It cannot hurt any in particular. The Sovereign, merely by virtue of what it is, is always what it should be.

This, however, is not the case with the relation of the subjects to the Sovereign, which, despite the common interest, would have no security that they would fulfil their undertakings, unless it found means to assure itself of their fidelity.

In fact, each individual, as a man, may have a particular will contrary or dissimilar to the general will which he has as a citizen. His particular interest may speak to him quite differently from the common interest: his absolute and naturally independent existence may make him look upon what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous contribution, the loss of which will do less harm to others than the payment of it is burdensome to

himself; and, regarding the moral person which constitutes the State as a *persona ficta*, because not a man, he may wish to enjoy the rights of citizenship without being ready to fulfil the duties of a subject. The continuance of such an injustice could not but prove the undoing of the body politic.

In order then that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free; for this is the condition which, by giving each citizen to his country, secures him against all personal dependence. In this lies the key to the working of the political machine; this alone legitimizes civil undertakings, which, without it, would be absurd, tyrannical, and liable to the most frightful abuses.

The Civil State

The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a very remarkable change in man, by substituting justice, for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked. Then only, when the voice of duty takes the place of physical impulses and right of appetite, does *man*, who so far had considered only himself, find that he is forced to act on different principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations. Although, in this state, he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are so stimulated and developed, his ideas so extended, his feelings so ennobled, and his whole soul so uplifted, that, did not the abuses of this new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it for ever, and, instead of a stupid and unimaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man.

Let us draw up the whole account in terms easily commensurable. What man loses by the social contract in his natural liberty and an unlimited right to everything he tries to get and succeeds in getting; what he gains is civil liberty and the proprietorship of all he possesses. If we are to avoid mistake in weighing one against the other, we must clearly distinguish natural liberty, which is bounded only by the strength of the individual, from civil liberty, which is limited by the general will; and possession, which is merely the effect of force or the right of the first occupier, from property, which can be founded only on a positive title.

We might, over and above all this, add, to what man acquires in the civil state, moral liberty, which alone makes him truly master of himself; for the mere impulse of appetite

is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty. But I have already said too much on this head, and the philosophical meaning of the word liberty does not now concern us.

Real Property

Each member of the community gives himself to it, at the moment of its foundation, just as he is, with all the resources at his command, including the goods he possesses. This act does not make possession, in changing hands, change its nature, and becomes property in the hands of the Sovereign; but, as the forces of the city are incomparably greater than those of an individual, public possession is also, in fact, stronger and more irrevocable, without being any more legitimate, at any rate from the point of view of foreigners. For the State, in relation to its members, is master of all their goods by the social contract, which, within the State, is the basis of all rights; but, in relation to other powers, it is so only by the right of the first occupier, which it holds from its members.

The right of the first occupier, though more real than the right of the strongest, becomes a real right only when the right of property has already been established. Every man has naturally a right to everything he needs; but the positive act which makes him proprietor of one thing excludes him from everything else. Having his share, he ought to keep to it, and can have no further right against the community. This is why the right of the first occupier, which in the state of nature is so weak, claims the respect of every man in civil society. In this right we are respecting not so much what belongs to another as what does not belong to ourselves.

In general, to establish the right of the first occupier over a plot of ground, the following conditions are necessary: first, the land must not yet be inhabited; secondly, a man must occupy only the amount he needs for his subsistence; and, in the third place, possession must be taken, not by an empty ceremony, but by labour and cultivation, the only sign of proprietorship that should be respected by others, in default of a legal title.

In granting the right of first occupancy to necessity and labour, are we not really stretching it as far as it can go? Is it possible to leave such a right unlimited? Is it to be enough to set foot on a plot of common ground, in order to be able to call yourself at once the master of it? Is it to be enough that a man has the strength to expel others for a moment, in order to establish his right to prevent them from ever returning? How can a man or a people seize an immense territory and keep it from the rest of the world except by a punishable usurpation, since all others are being robbed, by such an act, of the place of habitation and the means of subsistence which nature gave them in common? When

Núñez Balbao, standing on the sea-shore, took possession of the South Seas and the whole of South America in the name of the crown of Castille, was that enough to dispossess all their actual inhabitants, and to shut out from them all the princes of the world? On such a showing, these ceremonies are idly multiplied, and the Catholic King need only take possession all at once, from his apartment, of the whole universe, merely making a subsequent reservation about what was already in the possession of other princes.

We can imagine how the lands of individuals, where they were contiguous and came to be united, became the public territory, and how the right of Sovereignty, extending from the subjects over the lands they held, became at once real and personal. The possessors were thus made more dependent, and the forces at their command used to guarantee their fidelity. The advantage of this does not seem to have been felt by ancient monarchs, who called themselves King of the Persians, Scythians, or Macedonians, and seemed to regard themselves more as rulers of men than as masters of a country. Those of the present day more cleverly call themselves Kings of France, Spain, England, etc.: thus holding the land, they are quite confident of holding the inhabitants.

The peculiar fact about this alienation is that, in taking over the goods of individuals, the community, so far from despoiling them, only assures them legitimate possession, and changes usurpation into a true right and enjoyment into proprietorship. Thus the possessors, being regarded as depositaries of the public good, and having their rights, respected by all the members of the State and maintained against foreign aggression by all its forces, have, by a cession which benefits both the public and still more themselves, acquired, so to speak, all that they gave up. This paradox may easily be explained by the distinction between the rights which the Sovereign and the proprietor have over the same estate, as we shall see later on. It may also happen that men begin to unite one with another before they possess anything, and that, subsequently occupying a tract of country which is enough for all, they enjoy it in common, or share it out among themselves, either equally or according to a scale fixed by the Sovereign. However the acquisition be made, the right which each individual has to his own estate is always subordinate to the right which the community has over all: without this, there would be neither stability in the social tie, nor real force in the exercise of Sovereignty.

I shall end this chapter and this book by remarking on a fact on which the whole social system should rest: *i.e.* that, instead of destroying natural inequality, the fundamental compact substitutes, for such physical inequality as nature may have set up between men, an equality that is moral and legitimate, and that men, who may be unequal in strength or

intelligence, become every one equal by convention and legal right.⁸⁹

[...]

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On Negotiating a Just Contract – John Rawls

From *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls

The Role of Justice

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests. The only thing that permits us to acquiesce in an erroneous theory is the lack of a better one; analogously, an injustice is tolerable only when it is necessary to avoid an even greater injustice. Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising.

These propositions seem to express our intuitive conviction of the primacy of justice. No

⁸⁹ Under bad governments, this equality is only apparent and illusory: it serves only to keep the pauper in his poverty and the rich man in the position he has usurped. In fact, laws are always of use to those who possess and harmful to those who have nothing: from which it follows that the social state is advantageous to men only when all have something and none too much.

doubt they are expressed too strongly. In any event I wish to inquire whether these contentions or others similar to them are sound, and if so how they can be accounted for. To this end it is necessary to work out a theory of justice in the light of which these assertions can be interpreted and assessed. I shall begin by considering the role of the principles of justice. Let us assume, to fix ideas, that a society is a more or less self-sufficient association of persons who in their relations to one another recognize certain rules of conduct as binding and who for the most part act in accordance with them. Suppose further that these rules specify a system of cooperation designed to advance the good of those taking part in it. Then, although a society is a cooperative venture for mutual advantage, it is typically marked by a conflict as well as by an identity of interests. There is an identity of interests since social cooperation makes possible a better life for all than any would have if each were to live solely by his own efforts. There is a conflict of interests since persons are not indifferent as to how the greater benefits produced by their collaboration are distributed, for in order to pursue their ends they each prefer a larger to a lesser share. A set of principles is required for choosing among the various social arrangements which determine this division of advantages and for underwriting an agreement on the proper distributive shares. These principles are the principles of social justice: they provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation. . . .

The Main Idea of the Theory Of Justice

My aim is to present a conception of justice which generalizes and carries to a higher level of abstraction the familiar theory of the social contract as found, say, in Locke, Rousseau, and Kant. In order to do this we are not to think of the original contract as one to enter a particular society or to set up a particular form of government. Rather, the guiding idea is that the principles of justice for the basic structure of society are the object of the original agreement. They are the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association. These principles are to regulate all further agreements; they specify the kinds of social cooperation that can be entered into and the forms of government that can be established. This way of regarding the principles of justice I shall call justice as fairness.

The Original Position

Thus we are to imagine that those who engage in social cooperation choose together, in one joint act, the principles which are to assign basic rights and duties and to determine

the division of social benefits. Men are to decide in advance how they are to regulate their claims against one another and what is to be the foundation charter of their society. Just as each person must decide by rational reflection what constitutes his good, that is, the system of ends which it is rational for him to pursue, so a group of persons must decide once and for all what is to count among them as just and unjust. The choice which rational men would make in this hypothetical situation of equal liberty, assuming for the present that this choice problem has a solution, determines the principles of justice.

The Veil of Ignorance

In justice as fairness the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. This original position is not, of course, thought of as an actual historical state of affairs, much less as a primitive condition of culture. It is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterized so as to lead to a certain conception of justice.

Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like, I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain. For given the circumstances of the original position, the symmetry of everyone's relations to each other, this initial situation is fair between individuals as moral persons, that is, as rational beings with their own ends and capable, I shall assume, of a sense of justice. The original position is, one might say, the appropriate initial status quo, and thus the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This explains the propriety of the name "justice as fairness": it conveys the idea that the principles of justice are agreed to in an initial situation that is fair. The name does not mean that the concepts of justice and fairness are the same, any more than the phrase "poetry as metaphor" means that the concepts of poetry and metaphor are the same.

The Choice of Principles

Justice as fairness begins, as I have said, with one of the most general of all choices which persons might make together, namely, with the choice of the first principles of a

conception of justice which is to regulate all subsequent criticism and reform of institutions. Then, having chosen a conception of justice, we can suppose that they are to choose a constitution and a legislature to enact laws, and so on, all in accordance with the principles of justice initially agreed upon. Our social situation is just if it is such that by this sequence of hypothetical agreements we would have contracted into the general system of rules which defines it. Moreover, assuming that the original position does determine a set of principles (that is, that a particular conception of justice would be chosen), it will then be true that whenever social institutions satisfy these principles those engaged in them can say to one another that they are cooperating on terms to which they would agree if they were free and equal persons whose relations with respect to one another were fair. They could all view their arrangements as meeting the stipulations which they would acknowledge in an initial situation that embodies widely accepted and reasonable constraints on the choice of principles. The general recognition of this fact would provide the basis for a public acceptance of the corresponding principles of justice. No society can, of course, be a scheme of cooperation which men enter voluntarily in a literal sense; each person finds himself placed at birth in some particular position in some particular society and the nature of this position materially affects his life prospects. Yet a society satisfying the principles of justice as fairness comes as close as a society can to being a voluntary scheme, for it meets the principles which free and equal persons would assent to under circumstances that are fair. In this sense its members are autonomous and the obligations they recognize self-imposed.

Rationality

One feature of justice as fairness is to think of the parties in the initial situation as rational and mutually disinterested. This does not mean that the parties are egoists, that is, individuals with only certain kinds of interests, say in wealth, prestige, and domination. But they are conceived as not taking an interest in one another's interests. They are to presume that even their spiritual aims may be opposed, in the way that the aims of those of different religions may be opposed. Moreover, the concept of rationality must be interpreted as far as possible in the narrow sense, standard in economic theory of taking the most effective means to given ends. I shall modify this concept to some extent, ... but one must try to avoid introducing into it any controversial ethical elements. The initial situation must be characterized by stipulations that are widely accepted.

In working out the conception of justice as fairness one main task clearly is to determine which principles of justice would be chosen in the original position. To do this we must describe this situation in some detail and formulate with care the problem of choice which it original agreement in a situation of equality it is an open question whether the

principle of utility would be acknowledged. Offhand it hardly seems likely that persons who view themselves as equals, entitled to press their claims upon one another, would agree to a principle which may require lesser life prospects for some simply for the sake of a greater sum of advantages enjoyed by others. Since each desires to protect his - interests, his capacity to advance his conception of the good, no one has a reason to acquiesce in an enduring loss for himself in order to bring about a greater net balance of satisfaction. In the absence of strong and lasting benevolent impulses, a rational man would not accept a basic structure merely because it maximized the algebraic sum of advantages irrespective of its permanent effects on his own basic rights and interests. Thus it seems that the principle of utility is incompatible with the conception of social cooperation among equals for mutual advantage. It appears to be inconsistent with the idea of reciprocity implicit in the notion of a well-ordered society. Or, at any rate, so I shall argue.

The Principles

I shall maintain instead that the persons in the initial situation would choose two rather different principles: the first requires equality in the assignment of basic rights and duties, while the second holds that social and economic inequalities, for example inequalities of wealth and authority are just only if they result in compensating benefits for everyone, and in particular for the least advantaged members of society. These principles rule out justifying institutions on the grounds that the hardships of some are offset by a greater good in the aggregate. It may be expedient but it is not just that some should have less in order that others may prosper. But there is no injustice in the greater benefits earned by a few provided that the situation of persons not so fortunate is thereby improved. The intuitive idea is that since everyone's well-being depends upon a scheme of cooperation without which no one could have a satisfactory life, the division of advantages should be such as to draw forth the willing cooperation of everyone taking part in it, including those less well situated. Yet this can be expected only if reasonable terms are proposed. The fortunate in their social position, neither of which we can be said to deserve, could expect the willing cooperation of others when some workable scheme is a necessary condition of the welfare of all. Once we decide to look for a conception of justice that nullifies the accidents of natural endowment and the contingencies of social circumstance as counters in quest for political and economic advantage, we are led to these principles. They express the result of leaving aside those aspects of the social world that seem arbitrary from a moral point of view.

The problem of the choice of principles, however, is extremely difficult. I do not expect the answer I shall suggest to be convincing to everyone. It is, therefore, worth noting

from the outset that justice as fairness, like other contract views, consists of two parts:

1. an interpretation of the initial situation and of the problem of choice posed there, and
2. a set of principles which, it is argued, would be agreed to.

One may accept the first part of the theory (or some variant thereof), but not the other, and conversely. The concept of the initial contractual situation may seem reasonable although the particular principles proposed are rejected. ...

The Original Position & Justification

I have said that the original position is the appropriate initial status quo which ensures that the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This fact yields the name "justice as fairness." It is clear, then, that I want to say that one conception of justice is more reasonable than another, or justifiable with respect to it, if rational persons in the initial situation would choose its principles over those of the other for the role of justice.

Conceptions of justice are to be ranked by their acceptability to persons so circumstanced. Understood in this way the question of justification is settled by working out a problem of deliberation: we have to ascertain which principles it would be rational to adopt given the contractual situation. This connects the theory of justice with the theory of rational choice. [...]

Equality

It seems reasonable to suppose that the parties in the original position are equal. That is, all have the same lights in the procedure for choosing principles; each can make proposals, submit reasons for their acceptance, and so on. Obviously the purpose of these conditions is to represent equality between human beings as moral persons, as creatures having a conception of their good and capable of a sense of justice. The basis of equality is taken to be similarity in these two respects. Systems of ends are not ranked in value; and each man is presumed to have the requisite ability to understand and to act upon whatever principles are adopted. Together with the veil of ignorance, these conditions define the principles of justice as those which rational persons concerned to advance their interests would consent to as equals when none are known to be advantaged or disadvantaged by social and natural contingencies.

Reflective Equilibrium

There is, however, another side to justifying a particular description of the original position. This is to see if the principles which would be chosen match our considered convictions of justice or extend them in an acceptable way. We can note whether applying these principles would lead us to make the same judgments about the basic structure of society which we now make intuitively and in which we have the greatest confidence; or whether, in cases where our present judgments are in doubt and given with hesitation, these principles offer a resolution which we can affirm on reflection. There are questions which we feel sure must be answered in a certain way. For example, we are confident that religious intolerance and racial discrimination are unjust. We think that we have examined these things with care and have reached what we believe is an impartial judgment not likely to be distorted by an excessive attention to our own interests. These convictions are provisional fixed points which we presume any conception of justice must fit. But we have much less assurance as to what is the correct distribution of wealth and authority. Here we may be looking for a way to remove our doubts. We can check an interpretation of the initial situation, then, by the capacity of its principles to accommodate our firmest convictions and to provide guidance where guidance is needed.

In searching for the most favored description of this situation we work from both ends. We begin by describing it so that it represents generally shared and preferably weak conditions. We then see if these conditions are strong enough to yield a significant set of principles. If not, we look for further premises equally reasonable. But if so, and these principles match our considered convictions of justice, then so far well and good. But presumably there will be discrepancies. In this case we have a choice. We can either modify the account of the initial situation or we can revise our existing judgments, for even the judgments we take provisionally as fixed points are liable to revision. By going back and forth, sometimes altering the conditions of the contractual circumstances, at others withdrawing our judgments and conforming them to principle, I assume that eventually we shall find a description of the initial situation that both expresses reasonable conditions and yields principles which match our considered judgments duly pruned and adjusted. This state of affairs I refer to as reflective equilibrium, it is an equilibrium because at last our principles and judgments coincide; and it is reflective since we know to what principles our judgments conform and the premises of their derivation. At the moment everything is in order. But this equilibrium is not necessarily stable. It is liable to be upset by further examination of the conditions which should be imposed on the contractual situation and by particular cases which may lead us to revise our judgments. Yet for the time being we have done what we can to render coherent and to justify our convictions of social justice. We have reached a conception of the original position. [...]

Two Principles of Justice

I shall now state in a provisional form the two principles of justice that I believe would be chosen in the original position. In this section I wish to make only the most general comments, and therefore the first formulation of these principles is tentative. [...]

The first statement of the two principles reads as follows.

Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both

- reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and
- attached to positions and offices open to all.

[...]

Basic Liberties

By way of general comment, these principles primarily apply, as I have said, to the basic structure of society. They are to govern the assignment of rights and duties and to regulate the distribution of social and economic advantages. As their formulation suggests, these principles presuppose that the social structure can be divided into two more or less distinct parts, the first principle applying to the one, the second to the other. They distinguish between those aspects of the social system that define and secure the equal liberties of citizenship and those that specify and establish social and economic inequalities. The basic liberties of citizens are, roughly speaking,

- political liberty (the right to vote and to be eligible for public office) together with freedom of speech and assembly;
- liberty of conscience and freedom of thought;
- freedom of the person along with the right to hold (personal) property; and
- freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law.

These liberties are all required to be equal by the first principle, since citizens of a just society are to have the same basic rights.

Distribution of Wealth

The second principle applies, in the first approximation, to the distribution of income and wealth and to the design of organizations that make, use of differences in authority and responsibility, or chains of command. **While the distribution of wealth and income need not be equal, it must be to everyone's advantage**, and at the same time, positions of authority and offices of command must be accessible to all. One applies the second principle by holding positions open, and then, subject to this constraint, arranges social and economic inequalities so that everyone benefits.

These principles are to be arranged in a serial order with the first principle prior to the second. This ordering means that a departure from the institutions of equal liberty required by the first principle cannot be justified by, or compensated for, by greater social and economic advantages. The distribution of wealth and income, and the hierarchies of authority, must be consistent with both the liberties of equal citizenship and equality of opportunity.

It is clear that these principles are rather specific in their content, and their acceptance rests on certain assumptions that I must eventually try to explain and justify. A theory of justice depends upon a theory of society in ways that will become evident as we proceed. For the present, it should be observed that the two principles (and this holds for all formulations) are a special case of a more general conception of justice that can be expressed as follows.

All social values—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage.

Injustice, then, is simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all. Of course, this conception is extremely vague and requires interpretation.

As a first step, suppose that the basic structure of society distributes certain primary goods, that is, things that every rational man is presumed to want. These goods normally have a use whatever a person's rational plan of life. For simplicity, assume that the chief primary goods at the disposition of society are rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income and wealth. . . . These are the social primary goods. Other primary goods such as health and vigor, intelligence and imagination, are natural goods; although their possession is influenced by the basic structure, they are not so directly under its control. Imagine, then, a hypothetical initial arrangement in which all the social primary goods are equally distributed: everyone has similar rights and duties, and income and wealth are evenly shared. This state of affairs provides a benchmark for judging improvements. If certain inequalities of wealth and organizational powers would make

everyone better off than in this hypothetical starting situation, then they accord with the general conception. ...

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On Inequality – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

From *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* by Rousseau

THE first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying This is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, "Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody." But there is great probability that things had then already come to such a pitch, that they could no longer continue as they were; for the idea of property depends on many prior ideas, which could only be acquired successively, and cannot have been formed all at once in the human mind. Mankind must have made very considerable progress, and acquired considerable knowledge and industry which they must also have transmitted and increased from age to age, before they arrived at this last point of the state of nature. Let us then go farther back, and endeavor to unify under a single point of view that slow succession of events and discoveries in the most natural order.

Man's first feeling was that of his own existence, and his first care that of self-preservation. The produce of the earth furnished him with all he needed, and instinct told him how to use it. Hunger and other appetites made him at various times experience various modes of existence; and among these was one which urged him to propagate his species — a blind propensity that, having nothing to do with the heart, produced a merely animal act. The want once gratified, the two sexes knew each other no more; and even the offspring was nothing to its mother, as soon as it could do without her.

Such was the condition of infant man; the life of an animal limited at first to mere sensations, and hardly profiting by the gifts nature bestowed on him, much less capable of entertaining a thought of forcing anything from her. But difficulties soon presented themselves, and it became necessary to learn how to surmount them: the height of the trees, which prevented him from gathering their fruits, the competition of other animals desirous of the same fruits, and the ferocity of those who needed them for their own preservation, all obliged him to apply himself to bodily exercises. He had to be active, swift of foot, and vigorous in fight. Natural weapons, stones and sticks, were easily found: he learnt to surmount the obstacles of nature, to contend in case of necessity with other animals, and to dispute for the means of subsistence even with other men, or to indemnify himself for what he was forced to give up to a stronger.

In proportion as the human race grew more numerous, men's cares increased. The difference of soils, climates and seasons, must have introduced some differences into their manner of living. Barren years, long and sharp winters, scorching summers which parched the fruits of the earth, must have demanded a new industry. On the seashore and the banks of rivers, they invented the hook and line, and became fishermen and eaters of fish. In the forests they made bows and arrows, and became huntsmen and warriors. In cold countries they clothed themselves with the skins of the beasts they had slain. The lightning, a volcano, or some lucky chance acquainted them with fire, a new resource against the rigors of winter: they next learned how to preserve this element, then how to reproduce it, and finally how to prepare with it the flesh of animals which before they had eaten raw.

This repeated relevance of various beings to himself, and one to another, would naturally give rise in the human mind to the perceptions of certain relations between them. Thus the relations which we denote by the terms, great, small, strong, weak, swift, slow, fearful, bold, and the like, almost insensibly compared at need, must have at length produced in him a kind of reflection, or rather a mechanical prudence, which would indicate to him the precautions most necessary to his security.

The new intelligence which resulted from this development increased his superiority over other animals, by making him sensible of it. He would now endeavor, therefore, to ensnare them, would play them a thousand tricks, and though many of them might surpass him in swiftness or in strength, would in time become the master of some and the scourge of others. Thus, the first time he looked into himself, he felt the first emotion of pride; and, at a time when he scarce knew how to distinguish the different orders of beings, by looking upon his species as of the highest order, he prepared the way for assuming pre-eminence as an individual.

Other men, it is true, were not then to him what they now are to us, and he had no greater intercourse with them than with other animals; yet they were not neglected in his observations. The conformities, which he would in time discover between them, and between himself and his female, led him to judge of others which were not then perceptible; and finding that they all behaved as he himself would have done in like circumstances, he naturally inferred that their manner of thinking and acting was altogether in conformity with his own. This important truth, once deeply impressed on his mind, must have induced him, from an intuitive feeling more certain and much more rapid than any kind of reasoning, to pursue the rules of conduct, which he had best observe towards them, for his own security and advantage.

Taught by experience that the love of well-being is the sole motive of human actions, he found himself in a position to distinguish the few cases, in which mutual interest might justify him in relying upon the assistance of his fellows; and also the still fewer cases in which a conflict of interests might give cause to suspect them. In the former case, he joined in the same herd with them, or at most in some kind of loose association, that laid no restraint on its members, and lasted no longer than the transitory occasion that formed it. In the latter case, every one sought his own private advantage, either by open force, if he thought himself strong enough, or by address and cunning, if he felt himself the weaker.

In this manner, men may have insensibly acquired some gross ideas of mutual undertakings, and of the advantages of fulfilling them: that is, just so far as their present and apparent interest was concerned: for they were perfect strangers to foresight, and were so far from troubling themselves about the distant future, that they hardly thought of the morrow. If a deer was to be taken, every one saw that, in order to succeed, he must abide faithfully by his post: but if a hare happened to come within the reach of any one of them, it is not to be doubted that he pursued it without scruple, and, having seized his prey, cared very little, if by so doing he caused his companions to miss theirs.

It is easy to understand that such intercourse would not require a language much more refined than that of rooks or monkeys, who associate together for much the same purpose. Inarticulate cries, plenty of gestures and some imitative sounds, must have been for a long time the universal language; and by the addition, in every country, of some conventional articulate sounds (of which, as I have already intimated, the first institution is not too easy to explain) particular languages were produced; but these were rude and imperfect, and nearly such as are now to be found among some savage nations.

Hurried on by the rapidity of time, by the abundance of things I have to say, and by the almost insensible progress of things in their beginnings, I pass over in an instant a

multitude of ages; for the slower the events were in their succession, the more rapidly may they be described.

These first advances enabled men to make others with greater rapidity. In proportion as they grew enlightened, they grew industrious. They ceased to fall asleep under the first tree, or in the first cave that afforded them shelter; they invented several kinds of implements of hard and sharp stones, which they used to dig up the earth, and to cut wood; they then made huts out of branches, and afterwards learnt to plaster them over with mud and clay. This was the epoch of a first revolution, which established and distinguished families, and introduced a kind of property, in itself the source of a thousand quarrels and conflicts. As, however, the strongest were probably the first to build themselves huts which they felt themselves able to defend, it may be concluded that the weak found it much easier and safer to imitate, than to attempt to dislodge them: and of those who were once provided with huts, none could have any inducement to appropriate that of his neighbor; not indeed so much because it did not belong to him, as because it could be of no use, and he could not make himself master of it without exposing himself to a desperate battle with the family which occupied it.

The first expansions of the human heart were the effects of a novel situation, which united husbands and wives, fathers and children, under one roof. The habit of living together soon gave rise to the finest feelings known to humanity, conjugal love and paternal affection. Every family became a little society, the more united because liberty and reciprocal attachment were the only bonds of its union. The sexes, whose manner of life had been hitherto the same, began now to adopt different ways of living. The women became more sedentary, and accustomed themselves to mind the hut and their children, while the men went abroad in search of their common subsistence. From living a softer life, both sexes also began to lose something of their strength and ferocity: but, if individuals became to some extent less able to encounter wild beasts separately, they found it, on the other hand, easier to assemble and resist in common.

The simplicity and solitude of man's life in this new condition, the paucity of his wants, and the implements he had invented to satisfy them, left him a great deal of leisure, which he employed to furnish himself with many conveniences unknown to his fathers: and this was the first yoke he inadvertently imposed on himself, and the first source of the evils he prepared for his descendants. For, besides continuing thus to enervate both body and mind, these conveniences lost with use almost all their power to please, and even degenerated into real needs, till the want of them became far more disagreeable than the possession of them had been pleasant. Men would have been unhappy at the loss of them, though the possession did not make them happy.

We can here see a little better how the use of speech became established, and insensibly improved in each family, and we may form a conjecture also concerning the manner in which various causes may have extended and accelerated the progress of language, by making it more and more necessary. Floods or earthquakes surrounded inhabited districts with precipices or waters: revolutions of the globe tore off portions from the continent, and made them islands. It is readily seen that among men thus collected and compelled to live together, a common idiom must have arisen much more easily than among those who still wandered through the forests of the continent. Thus it is very possible that after their first essays in navigation the islanders brought over the use of speech to the continent: and it is at least very probable that communities and languages were first established in islands, and even came to perfection there before they were known on the mainland.

Everything now begins to change its aspect. Men, who have up to now been roving in the woods, by taking to a more settled manner of life, come gradually together, form separate bodies, and at length in every country arises a distinct nation, united in character and manners, not by regulations or laws, but by uniformity of life and food, and the common influence of climate. Permanent neighborhood could not fail to produce, in time, some connection between different families. Among young people of opposite sexes, living in neighboring huts, the transient commerce required by nature soon led, through mutual intercourse, to another kind not less agreeable, and more permanent. Men began now to take the difference between objects into account, and to make comparisons; they acquired imperceptibly the ideas of beauty and merit, which soon gave rise to feelings of preference. In consequence of seeing each other often, they could not do without seeing each other constantly. A tender and pleasant feeling insinuated itself into their souls, and the least opposition turned it into an impetuous fury: with love arose jealousy; discord triumphed, and human blood was sacrificed to the gentlest of all passions.

As ideas and feelings succeeded one another, and heart and head were brought into play, men continued to lay aside their original wildness; their private connections became every day more intimate as their limits extended. They accustomed themselves to assemble before their huts round a large tree; singing and dancing, the true offspring of love and leisure, became the amusement, or rather the occupation, of men and women thus assembled together with nothing else to do. Each one began to consider the rest, and to wish to be considered in turn; and thus a value came to be attached to public esteem. Whoever sang or danced best, whoever was the handsomest, the strongest, the most dexterous, or the most eloquent, came to be of most consideration; and this was the first step towards inequality, and at the same time towards vice. From these first distinctions arose on the one side vanity and contempt and on the other shame and envy: and the fermentation caused by these new leavens ended by producing combinations fatal to

innocence and happiness.

As soon as men began to value one another, and the idea of consideration had got a footing in the mind, every one put in his claim to it, and it became impossible to refuse it to any with impunity. Hence arose the first obligations of civility even among savages; and every intended injury became an affront; because, besides the hurt which might result from it, the party injured was certain to find in it a contempt for his person, which was often more insupportable than the hurt itself.

Thus, as every man punished the contempt shown him by others, in proportion to his opinion of himself, revenge became terrible, and men bloody and cruel. This is precisely the state reached by most of the savage nations known to us: and it is for want of having made a proper distinction in our ideas, and see how very far they already are from the state of nature, that so many writers have hastily concluded that man is naturally cruel, and requires civil institutions to make him more mild; whereas nothing is more gentle than man in his primitive state, as he is placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes, and the fatal ingenuity of civilized man. Equally confined by instinct and reason to the sole care of guarding himself against the mischiefs which threaten him, he is restrained by natural compassion from doing any injury to others, and is not led to do such a thing even in return for injuries received. For, according to the axiom of the wise Locke, There can be no injury, where there is no property.

But it must be remarked that the society thus formed, and the relations thus established among men, required of them qualities different from those which they possessed from their primitive constitution. Morality began to appear in human actions, and every one, before the institution of law, was the only judge and avenger of the injuries done him, so that the goodness which was suitable in the pure state of nature was no longer proper in the new-born state of society. Punishments had to be made more severe, as opportunities of offending became more frequent, and the dread of vengeance had to take the place of the rigor of the law. Thus, though men had become less patient, and their natural compassion had already suffered some diminution, this period of expansion of the human faculties, keeping a just mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our egoism, must have been the happiest and most stable of epochs. The more we reflect on it, the more we shall find that this state was the least subject to revolutions, and altogether the very best man could experience; so that he can have departed from it only through some fatal accident, which, for the public good, should never have happened. The example of savages, most of whom have been found in this state, seems to prove that men were meant to remain in it, that it is the real youth of the world, and that all subsequent advances have been apparently so many steps towards the

perfection of the individual, but in reality towards the decrepitude of the species.

So long as men remained content with their rustic huts, so long as they were satisfied with clothes made of the skins of animals and sewn together with thorns and fish-bones, adorned themselves only with feathers and shells, and continued to paint their bodies different colors, to improve and beautify their bows and arrows and to make with sharp-edged stones fishing boats or clumsy musical instruments; in a word, so long as they undertook only what a single person could accomplish, and confined themselves to such arts as did not require the joint labor of several hands, they lived free, healthy, honest and happy lives, so long as their nature allowed, and as they continued to enjoy the pleasures of mutual and independent intercourse. But from the moment one man began to stand in need of the help of another; from the moment it appeared advantageous to any one man to have enough provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, work became indispensable, and vast forests became smiling fields, which man had to water with the sweat of his brow, and where slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow up with the crops.

[...]

The cultivation of the earth necessarily brought about its distribution; and property, once recognised, gave rise to the first rules of justice; for, to secure each man his own, it had to be possible for each to have something. Besides, as men began to look forward to the future, and all had something to lose, everyone had reason to apprehend that reprisals would follow any injury he might do to another. This origin is so much the more natural, as it is impossible to conceive how property can come from anything but manual labor: for what else can a man add to things which he does not originally create, so as to make them his own property? It is the husbandman's labor alone that, giving him a title to the produce of the ground he has tilled, gives him a claim also to the land itself, at least till harvest, and so, from year to year, a constant possession which is easily transformed into property. When the ancients, says Grotius, gave to Ceres the title of *Legislatrix*, and to a festival celebrated in her honor the name of *Thesmophoria*, they meant by that that the distribution of lands had produced a new kind of right: that is to say, the right of property, which is different from the right deducible from the law of nature.

In this state of affairs, equality might have been sustained, had the talents of individuals been equal, and had, for example, the use of iron and the consumption of commodities always exactly balanced each other; but, as there was nothing to preserve this balance, it was soon disturbed; the strongest did most work; the most skillful turned his labor to best account; the most ingenious devised methods of diminishing his labor: the husbandman wanted more iron, or the smith more corn, and, while both labored equally, the one

gained a great deal by his work, while the other could hardly support himself. Thus natural inequality unfolds itself insensibly with that of combination, and the difference between men, developed by their different circumstances, becomes more sensible and permanent in its effects, and begins to have an influence, in the same proportion, over the lot of individuals.

Matters once at this pitch, it is easy to imagine the rest. I shall not detain the reader with a description of the successive invention of other arts, the development of language, the trial and utilization of talents, the inequality of fortunes, the use and abuse of riches, and all the details connected with them which the reader can easily supply for himself. I shall confine myself to a glance at mankind in this new situation.

Behold then all human faculties developed, memory and imagination in full play, egoism interested, reason active, and the mind almost at the highest point of its perfection. Behold all the natural qualities in action, the rank and condition of every man assigned him; not merely his share of property and his power to serve or injure others, but also his wit, beauty, strength or skill, merit or talents: and these being the only qualities capable of commanding respect, it soon became necessary to possess or to affect them.

It now became the interest of men to appear what they really were not. To be and to seem became two totally different things; and from this distinction sprang insolent pomp and cheating trickery, with all the numerous vices that go in their train. On the other hand, free and independent as men were before, they were now, in consequence of a multiplicity of new wants, brought into subjection, as it were, to all nature, and particularly to one another; and each became in some degree a slave even in becoming the master of other men: if rich, they stood in need of the services of others; if poor, of their assistance; and even a middle condition did not enable them to do without one another. Man must now, therefore, have been perpetually employed in getting others to interest themselves in his lot, and in making them, apparently at least, if not really, find their advantage in promoting his own. Thus he must have been sly and artful in his behavior to some, and imperious and cruel to others; being under a kind of necessity to ill-use all the persons of whom he stood in need, when he could not frighten them into compliance, and did not judge it his interest to be useful to them. Insatiable ambition, the thirst of raising their respective fortunes, not so much from real want as from the desire to surpass others, inspired all men with a vile propensity to injure one another, and with a secret jealousy, which is the more dangerous, as it puts on the mask of benevolence, to carry its point with greater security. In a word, there arose rivalry and competition on the one hand, and conflicting interests on the other, together with a secret desire on both of profiting at the expense of others. All these evils were the first effects of property, and the inseparable

attendants of growing inequality.

Before the invention of signs to represent riches, wealth could hardly consist in anything but lands and cattle, the only real possessions men can have. But, when inheritances so increased in number and extent as to occupy the whole of the land, and to border on one another, one man could aggrandize himself only at the expense of another; at the same time the supernumeraries, who had been too weak or too indolent to make such acquisitions, and had grown poor without sustaining any loss, because, while they saw everything change around them, they remained still the same, were obliged to receive their subsistence, or steal it, from the rich; and this soon bred, according to their different characters, dominion and slavery, or violence and rapine. The wealthy, on their part, had no sooner begun to taste the pleasure of command, than they disdained all others, and, using their old slaves to acquire new, thought of nothing but subduing and enslaving their neighbors; like ravenous wolves, which, having once tasted human flesh, despise every other food and thenceforth seek only men to devour.

Thus, as the most powerful or the most miserable considered their might or misery as a kind of right to the possessions of others, equivalent, in their opinion, to that of property, the destruction of equality was attended by the most terrible disorders.

Usurpations by the rich, robbery by the poor, and the unbridled passions of both, suppressed the cries of natural compassion and the still feeble voice of justice, and filled men with avarice, ambition and vice. Between the title of the strongest and that of the first occupier, there arose perpetual conflicts, which never ended but in battles and bloodshed. The new-born state of society thus gave rise to a horrible state of war; men thus harassed and depraved were no longer capable of retracing their steps or renouncing the fatal acquisitions they had made, but, laboring by the abuse of the faculties which do them honor, merely to their own confusion, brought themselves to the brink of ruin.

It is impossible that men should not at length have reflected on so wretched a situation, and on the calamities that overwhelmed them. The rich, in particular, must have felt how much they suffered by a constant state of war, of which they bore all the expense; and in which, though all risked their lives, they alone risked their property. Besides, however speciously they might disguise their usurpations, they knew that they were founded on precarious and false titles; so that, if others took from them by force what they themselves had gained by force, they would have no reason to complain. Even those who had been enriched by their own industry, could hardly base their proprietorship on better claims. It was in vain to repeat, "I built this well; I gained this spot by my industry." Who gave you your standing, it might be answered, and what right have you to demand payment of us for doing what we never asked you to do? Do you not know that numbers of

your fellow-creatures are starving, for want of what you have too much of? You ought to have had the express and universal consent of mankind, before appropriating more of the common subsistence than you needed for your own maintenance. Destitute of valid reasons to justify and sufficient strength to defend himself, able to crush individuals with ease, but easily crushed himself by a troop of bandits, one against all, and incapable, on account of mutual jealousy, of joining with his equals against numerous enemies united by the common hope of plunder, the rich man, thus urged by necessity, conceived at length the profoundest plan that ever entered the mind of man: this was to employ in his favor the forces of those who attacked him, to make allies of his adversaries, to inspire them with different maxims, and to give them other institutions as favorable to himself as the law of nature was unfavorable.

With this view, after having represented to his neighbors the horror of a situation which armed every man against the rest, and made their possessions as burdensome to them as their wants, and in which no safety could be expected either in riches or in poverty, he readily devised plausible arguments to make them close with his design. “Let us join,” said he, “to guard the weak from oppression, to restrain the ambitious, and secure to every man the possession of what belongs to him: let us institute rules of justice and peace, to which all without exception may be obliged to conform; rules that may in some measure make amends for the caprices of fortune, by subjecting equally the powerful and the weak to the observance of reciprocal obligations. Let us, in a word, instead of turning our forces against ourselves, collect them in a supreme power which may govern us by wise laws, protect and defend all the members of the association, repulse their common enemies, and maintain eternal harmony among us.”

[...]

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On Communism – Karl Marx & Frederick Engels

From *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels.

MANIFESTO of the Communist Party

A **SPECTRE** is haunting Europe—the specter of Communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter; Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies.

Where is the party in opposition that has not been decried as communistic by its opponents in power? Where the Opposition that has not hurled back the branding reproach of Communism, against the more advanced opposition parties, as well as against its reactionary adversaries?

Two things result from this fact.

Communism is already acknowledged by all European Powers to be itself a Power.

It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the Specter of Communism with a Manifesto of the party itself.

To this end, Communists of various nationalities have assembled in London, and sketched the following manifesto, to be published in the English, French, German, Italian, Flemish and Danish languages.

1. Lassalle personally, to us, always acknowledged himself to be a disciple of Marx, and, as such, stood on the ground of the “Manifesto.” But in his public agitation, 1860-64, he did not go beyond demanding co-operative workshops supported by State credit.

2. The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844. By Frederick Engels. Translated by Florence K. Wischniewetzky—London, Swan, Sonnenschein Co.

I. BOURGEOIS AND PROLETARIANS. [1]

The history of all hitherto existing society[2] is the history of class struggles.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master[3] and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin

of the contending classes.

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold graduation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the middle ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.

The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones.

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature; it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.

From the serfs of the middle ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed.

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by close guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle-class; division of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand, ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle-class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.

Modern industry has established the world-market, for which the discovery of America

paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication by land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry; and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bourgeoisie developed, increased its capital, and pushed into the background every class handed down from the Middle Ages.

We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and of exchange.

Each step in the development of the bourgeoisie was accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class. An oppressed class under the sway of the feudal nobility, an armed and self-governing association in the mediaeval commune,[4] here independent urban republic (as in Italy and Germany), there taxable “third estate” of the monarchy (as in France), afterwards, in the period of manufacture proper, serving either the semi-feudal or the absolute monarchy as a counterpoise against the nobility, and, in fact, corner stone of the great monarchies in general, the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part.

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors,” and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment.” It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers.

The bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to a mere money relation.

The bourgeoisie has disclosed how it came to pass that the brutal display of vigor in the Middle Ages, which Reactionists so much admire, found its fitting complement in the most slothful indolence. It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former Exoduses of nations and crusades.

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property.

National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world-literature.

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i. e., to become bourgeois themselves. In a word, it creates a world after its own image.

The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased the urban population as compared with the rural, and has thus rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life. Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West.

The bourgeoisie keeps more and more doing away with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands. The necessary consequence of this was political centralization. Independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments and systems of taxation, became lumped together in one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier and one customs-tariff.

The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjection of Nature's forces to man, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalization of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground—what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labor?

We see then: the means of production and of exchange on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and of exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one word, the feudal relations of property became no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces; they became so many fetters. They had to burst asunder; they were burst asunder.

Into their places stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economic and political sway of the bourgeois class.

A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society. In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working-class—the proletarians.

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i. e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working-class, developed, a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital.

These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market.

Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labor, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman. He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack that is required of him. Hence, the cost of production of a workman is restricted, almost entirely, to the means of subsistence that he requires for his maintenance, and for the propagation of his race. But the price of a commodity, and also of labor, is equal to its cost of production. In proportion, therefore, as the repulsiveness of the work increases, the wage decreases. Nay more, in proportion as the use of machinery and division of labor increases, in the same proportion the burden of toil also increases, whether by prolongation of the working hours, by increase of the work enacted in a given time, or by increased speed of the machinery, etc.

Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they the slaves of the bourgeois class, and of the bourgeois State, they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine, by the over-looker, and, above all, by the individual bourgeois manufacturer himself. The more openly this despotism proclaims gain to be its end and aim, the more petty, the more hateful and the more embittering it is.

The less the skill and exertion or strength implied in manual labor, in other words, the more modern industry becomes developed, the more is the labor of men superseded by that of women. Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class. All are instruments of labor, more or less expensive to use, according to their age and sex.

No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc.

The lower strata of the Middle class—the small tradespeople, shopkeepers, and retired tradesmen generally, the handicraftsmen and peasants—all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists, partly because their specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of

production. Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.

The proletariat goes through various stages of development. With its birth begins its struggle with the bourgeoisie. At first the contest is carried on by individual laborers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them. They direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves; they destroy imported wares that compete with their labor, they smash to pieces machinery, they set factories ablaze, they seek to restore by force the vanished status of the workman of the Middle Ages.

At this stage the laborers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country, and broken up by their mutual competition. If anywhere they unite to form more compact bodies, this is not yet the consequence of their own active union, but of the union of the bourgeoisie, which class, in order to attain its own political ends, is compelled to set the whole proletariat in motion, and is moreover yet, for a time, able to do so. At this stage, therefore, the proletarians do not fight their enemies, but the enemies of their enemies, the remnants of absolute monarchy, the landowners, the non-industrial bourgeois, the petty bourgeoisie. Thus the whole historical movement is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie; every victory so obtained is a victory for the bourgeoisie.

But with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized, in proportion as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor, and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level. The growing competition among the bourgeois, and the resulting commercial crises, make the wages of the workers ever more fluctuating. The unceasing improvement of machinery, ever more rapidly developing, makes their livelihood more and more precarious; the collisions between individual workmen and individual bourgeois take more and more the character of collisions between two classes. Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions) against the bourgeois; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots.

Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers. This union is helped on by the improved means of communication that are created by modern industry, and that place the workers of different localities in contact with one another. It was just this contact that was needed to centralize the numerous local struggles, all of the

same character, into one national struggle between classes. But every class struggle is a political struggle. And that union, to attain which the burghers of the Middle Ages, with their miserable highways, required centuries, the modern proletarians, thanks to railways, achieve in a few years.

This organization of the proletarians into a class, and consequently into a political party, is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier. It compels legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself. Thus the ten-hour bill in England was carried.

Altogether collisions between the classes of the old society further, in many ways, the course of development of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle. At first with the aristocracy; later on, with those portions of the bourgeoisie itself, whose interests have become antagonistic to the progress of industry; at all times, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries. In all these battles it sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie.

Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress.

Finally, in times when the class-struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact, within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movements as a whole.

Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product.

The lower middle-class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant,

all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are, therefore, not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so, only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat, they thus defend not their present, but their future interests, they desert their own standpoint to place themselves at that of the proletariat.

The “dangerous class,” the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society, may, here and there, be swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution; its conditions of life, however, prepare it far more for the part of a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue.

In the conditions of the proletariat, those of old society at large are already virtually swamped. The proletarian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family-relations; modern industrial labor, modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped him of every trace of national character. Law, morality, religion, are to him so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests.

All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurances of, individual property.

All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.

Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.

In depicting the most general phases of the development of the proletariat, we traced the more or less veiled civil war, raging within existing society, up to the point where that war breaks out into open revolution, and where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, lays

the foundation for the sway of the proletariat.

Hitherto, every form of society has been based, as we have already seen, on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern laborer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule, because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labor. Wage-labor rests exclusively on competition between the laborers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.

1. By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labor. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor-power in order to live.

2. That is, all written history . In 1847, the pre-history of society, the social organization existing previous to recorded history , was all but unknown. Since then, Haxthausen discovered common ownership of land in Russia, Maurer proved it to be the social foundation from which all Teutonic races started in history , and by and by village communities were found to be, or to have been, the primitive form of society everywhere from India to Ireland. The inner organization of this primitive Communistic society was

laid bare, in its typical form, by Morgan's crowning discovery of the true nature of the gens and its relation to the tribe. With the dissolution of these primeval communities society begins to be differentiated into separate and finally antagonistic classes. I have attempted to retrace this process of dissolution in "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State". (Chicago, Charles H. Kerr Co.)

3. Guild-master, that is a full member of a guild, a master within, not a head of, a guild.

4. "Commune" was the name taken, in France, by the nascent towns even before they had conquered from their feudal lords and masters, local self-government and political rights as "the Third Estate." Generally speaking, for the economic development of the bourgeoisie, England it here taken as the typical country, for its political development, France.

II. PROLETARIANS AND COMMUNISTS.

In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?

The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.

They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement.

The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties; formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.

The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer.

They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes. The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of Communism.

All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions.

The French Revolution, for example, abolished feudal property in favor of bourgeois property.

The distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonism, on the exploitation of the many by the few.

In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.

We Communists have been reproached with the desire of abolishing the right of personally acquiring property as the fruit of a man's own labor, which property is alleged to be the ground work of all personal freedom, activity and independence.

Hard-won, self-acquired, self-earned property! Do you mean the property of the petty artisan and of the small peasant, a form of property that preceded the bourgeois form? There is no need to abolish that; the development of industry has to a great extent already destroyed it, and is still destroying it daily.

Or do you mean modern bourgeois private property?

But does wage-labor create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i. e., that kind of property which exploits wage-labor, and which cannot increase except upon condition of getting a new supply of wage-labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage-labor. Let us examine both sides of this antagonism.

To be a capitalist, is to have not only a purely personal, but a social status in production. Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in

the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion.

Capital is therefore not a personal, it is a social power.

When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class- character.

Let us now take wage-labor.

The average price of wage-labor is the minimum wage, i. e., that quantum of the means of subsistence, which is absolutely requisite to keep the laborer in bare existence as a laborer. What, therefore, the wage-laborer appropriates by means of his labor, merely suffices to prolong and reproduce a bare existence. We by no means intend to abolish this personal appropriation of the products of labor, an appropriation that is made for the maintenance and reproduction of human life, and that leaves no surplus wherewith to command the labor of others. All that we want to do away with is the miserable character of this appropriation, under which the laborer lives merely to increase capital, and is allowed to live only in so far as the interest of the ruling class requires it.

In bourgeois society, living labor is but a mean to increase accumulated labor. In Communist society, accumulated labor is but a means to widen, to enrich, to promote the existence of the laborer. In bourgeois society, therefore, the past dominates the present; in communist society, the present dominates the past. In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.

And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so. The abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom is undoubtedly aimed at.

By freedom is meant, under the present bourgeois conditions of production, free trade, free selling and buying.

But if selling and buying disappears, free selling and buying disappears also. This talk about free selling and buying, and all the other “brave words” of our bourgeoisie about freedom in general, have a meaning, if any, only in contrast with restricted selling and buying, with the fettered traders of the Middle Ages, but have no meaning when opposed to the Communistic abolition of buying and selling, of the bourgeois conditions of production, and of the bourgeoisie itself.

You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is, the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society.

In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

From the moment when labor can no longer be converted into capital, money, or rent, into a social power capable of being monopolized, i.e., from the moment when individual property can no longer be transformed into bourgeois property, into capital, from that moment, you say, individuality vanishes.

You must, therefore, confess that by “individual” you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, be swept out of the way, and made impossible.

Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society: all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation.

It has been objected, that upon the abolition of private property all work will cease, and universal laziness will overtake us.

According to this, bourgeois society ought long ago to have gone to the dogs through sheer idleness; for those of its members who work, acquire nothing, and those who acquire anything, do not work. The whole of this objection is but another expression of the tautology: that there can no longer be any wage-labor when there is no longer any capital.

All objections urged against the Communistic mode of producing and appropriating material products, have, in the same way, been urged against the Communistic modes of producing and appropriating intellectual products. Just as, to the bourgeois, the disappearance of class property is the disappearance of production itself, so the disappearance of class culture is to him identical with the disappearance of all culture.

That culture, the loss of which he laments, is, for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine.

But don't wrangle with us so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economic conditions of existence of your class.

The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property—historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production—this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you. What you see clearly in the case of ancient property, what you admit in the case of feudal property, you are of course forbidden to admit in the case of your own bourgeois form of property.

Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.

On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital.

Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty. But, you will say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations, when we replace home education by social.

And your education! Is not that also social, and determined by the social conditions under which you educate, by the intervention, direct or indirect, of society by means of schools, etc.? The Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class.

The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labor.

But you Communists would introduce community of women, screams the whole bourgeoisie in chorus.

The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and, naturally, can come to no other conclusion, than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

For the rest, nothing is more ridiculous than the virtuous indignation of our bourgeois at the community of women which, they pretend, is to be openly and officially established by the Communists. The Communists have no need to introduce community of women; it has existed almost from time immemorial.

Our bourgeois, not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each others' wives.

Bourgeois marriage is in reality a system of wives in common and thus, at the most, what the Communists might possibly be reproached with, is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalized community of women. For the rest, it is self-evident, that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i. e., of prostitution both public and private.

The Communists are further reproached with desiring to abolish countries and nationalities.

The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got. Since the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself the nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.

National differences, and antagonisms between peoples, are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world-market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.

The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. United action, of

the leading civilized countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end.

The charges against Communism made from a religious, a philosophical, and generally, from an ideological standpoint, are not deserving of serious examination.

Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?

What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes in character in proportion as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.

When people speak of ideas that revolutionize society, they do but express the fact, that within the old society, the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence.

When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death-battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience, merely gave expression to the sway of free competition within the domain of knowledge.

“Undoubtedly,” it will be said, “religious, moral, philosophical and juridical ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change.”

“There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience.”

What does this accusation reduce itself to? The history of all past society has consisted in

the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs.

But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms, or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms.

The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property-relations; no wonder that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas.

But let us have done with the bourgeois objections to Communism.

We have seen above, that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.

The proletariat will use its political supremacy, to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i. e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.

Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production.

These measures will of course be different in different countries.

Nevertheless in the most advanced countries the following will be pretty generally applicable:

1. Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes.
2. A heavy progressive or graduated income tax.
3. Abolition of all right of inheritance.
4. Confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels.
5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with

State capital and an exclusive monopoly.

6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State.
7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; the bringing into cultivation of waste lands, and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.
8. Equal liability of all to labor. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.
9. Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of population over the country.
10. Free education for all children in public schools. Abolition of children's factory labor in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, etc., etc.

When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms, and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.

In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

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Mclaughlin, *The Originals: Classic Readings in Western Philosophy*.

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On Anarchism – David Graeber

From “Are You An Anarchist? The Answer May Surprise You!” by David Graeber

Chances are you have already heard something about who anarchists are and what they are supposed to believe. Chances are almost everything you have heard is nonsense. Many people seem to think that anarchists are proponents of violence, chaos, and destruction, that they are against all forms of order and organization, or that they are crazed nihilists who just want to blow everything up. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Anarchists are simply people who believe human beings are capable of behaving in a reasonable fashion without having to be forced to. It is really a very simple notion. But it's one that the rich and powerful have always found extremely dangerous.

At their very simplest, anarchist beliefs turn on to two elementary assumptions. The first is that human beings are, under ordinary circumstances, about as reasonable and decent as they are allowed to be, and can organize themselves and their communities without needing to be told how. The second is that power corrupts. Most of all, anarchism is just a matter of having the courage to take the simple principles of common decency that we all live by, and to follow them through to their logical conclusions. Odd though this may seem, in most important ways you are probably already an anarchist — you just don't realize it.

Let's start by taking a few examples from everyday life.

If there's a line to get on a crowded bus, do you wait your turn and refrain from elbowing your way past others even in the absence of police?

If you answered “yes”, then you are used to acting like an anarchist! The most basic anarchist principle is self-organization: the assumption that human beings do not need to be threatened with prosecution in order to be able to come to reasonable understandings with each other, or to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Everyone believes they are capable of behaving reasonably themselves. If they think laws and police are necessary, it is only because they don't believe that other people are. But if you think about it, don't those people all feel exactly the same way about you? Anarchists argue that almost all the anti-social behavior which makes us think it's necessary to have armies, police, prisons, and governments to control our lives, is actually caused by the systematic inequalities and injustice those armies, police, prisons and governments make possible. It's all a vicious circle. If people are used to being treated like their opinions do

not matter, they are likely to become angry and cynical, even violent — which of course makes it easy for those in power to say that their opinions do not matter. Once they understand that their opinions really do matter just as much as anyone else's, they tend to become remarkably understanding. To cut a long story short: anarchists believe that for the most part it is power itself, and the effects of power, that make people stupid and irresponsible.

Are you a member of a club or sports team or any other voluntary organization where decisions are not imposed by one leader but made on the basis of general consent?

If you answered “yes”, then you belong to an organization which works on anarchist principles! Another basic anarchist principle is voluntary association. This is simply a matter of applying democratic principles to ordinary life. The only difference is that anarchists believe it should be possible to have a society in which everything could be organized along these lines, all groups based on the free consent of their members, and therefore, that all top-down, military styles of organization like armies or bureaucracies or large corporations, based on chains of command, would no longer be necessary. Perhaps you don't believe that would be possible. Perhaps you do. But every time you reach an agreement by consensus, rather than threats, every time you make a voluntary arrangement with another person, come to an understanding, or reach a compromise by taking due consideration of the other person's particular situation or needs, you are being an anarchist — even if you don't realize it.

Anarchism is just the way people act when they are free to do as they choose, and when they deal with others who are equally free — and therefore aware of the responsibility to others that entails. This leads to another crucial point: that while people can be reasonable and considerate when they are dealing with equals, human nature is such that they cannot be trusted to do so when given power over others. Give someone such power, they will almost invariably abuse it in some way or another.

Do you believe that most politicians are selfish, egotistical swine who don't really care about the public interest? Do you think we live in an economic system which is stupid and unfair?

If you answered “yes”, then you subscribe to the anarchist critique of today's society — at least, in its broadest outlines. Anarchists believe that power corrupts and those who spend their entire lives seeking power are the very last people who should have it. Anarchists believe that our present economic system is more likely to reward people for selfish and unscrupulous behavior than for being decent, caring human beings. Most people feel that way. The only difference is that most people don't think there's anything

that can be done about it, or anyway — and this is what the faithful servants of the powerful are always most likely to insist — anything that won't end up making things even worse.

But what if that weren't true?

And is there really any reason to believe this? When you can actually test them, most of the usual predictions about what would happen without states or capitalism turn out to be entirely untrue. For thousands of years people lived without governments. In many parts of the world people live outside of the control of governments today. They do not all kill each other. Mostly they just get on about their lives the same as anyone else would. Of course, in a complex, urban, technological society all this would be more complicated: but technology can also make all these problems a lot easier to solve. In fact, we have not even begun to think about what our lives could be like if technology were really marshaled to fit human needs. How many hours would we really need to work in order to maintain a functional society — that is, if we got rid of all the useless or destructive occupations like telemarketers, lawyers, prison guards, financial analysts, public relations experts, bureaucrats and politicians, and turn our best scientific minds away from working on space weaponry or stock market systems to mechanizing away dangerous or annoying tasks like coal mining or cleaning the bathroom, and distribute the remaining work among everyone equally? Five hours a day? Four? Three? Two? Nobody knows because no one is even asking this kind of question. Anarchists think these are the very questions we should be asking.

Do you really believe those things you tell your children (or that your parents told you)?

“It doesn't matter who started it.” “Two wrongs don't make a right.” “Clean up your own mess.” “Do unto others...” “Don't be mean to people just because they're different.” Perhaps we should decide whether we're lying to our children when we tell them about right and wrong, or whether we're willing to take our own injunctions seriously. Because if you take these moral principles to their logical conclusions, you arrive at anarchism.

Take the principle that two wrongs don't make a right. If you really took it seriously, that alone would knock away almost the entire basis for war and the criminal justice system. The same goes for sharing: we're always telling children that they have to learn to share, to be considerate of each other's needs, to help each other; then we go off into the real world where we assume that everyone is naturally selfish and competitive. But an anarchist would point out: in fact, what we say to our children is right. Pretty much every great worthwhile achievement in human history, every discovery or accomplishment that's improved our lives, has been based on cooperation and mutual aid; even now, most

of us spend more of our money on our friends and families than on ourselves; while likely as not there will always be competitive people in the world, there's no reason why society has to be based on encouraging such behavior, let alone making people compete over the basic necessities of life. That only serves the interests of people in power, who want us to live in fear of one another. That's why anarchists call for a society based not only on free association but mutual aid. The fact is that most children grow up believing in anarchist morality, and then gradually have to realize that the adult world doesn't really work that way. That's why so many become rebellious, or alienated, even suicidal as adolescents, and finally, resigned and bitter as adults; their only solace, often, being the ability to raise children of their own and pretend to them that the world is fair. But what if we really could start to build a world which really was at least founded on principles of justice? Wouldn't that be the greatest gift to one's children one could possibly give?

Do you believe that human beings are fundamentally corrupt and evil, or that certain sorts of people (women, people of color, ordinary folk who are not rich or highly educated) are inferior specimens, destined to be ruled by their betters?

If you answered "yes", then, well, it looks like you aren't an anarchist after all. But if you answered "no", then chances are you already subscribe to 90% of anarchist principles, and, likely as not, are living your life largely in accord with them. Every time you treat another human with consideration and respect, you are being an anarchist. Every time you work out your differences with others by coming to reasonable compromise, listening to what everyone has to say rather than letting one person decide for everyone else, you are being an anarchist. Every time you have the opportunity to force someone to do something, but decide to appeal to their sense of reason or justice instead, you are being an anarchist. The same goes for every time you share something with a friend, or decide who is going to do the dishes, or do anything at all with an eye to fairness.

Now, you might object that all this is well and good as a way for small groups of people to get on with each other, but managing a city, or a country, is an entirely different matter. And of course there is something to this. Even if you decentralize society and put as much power as possible in the hands of small communities, there will still be plenty of things that need to be coordinated, from running railroads to deciding on directions for medical research. But just because something is complicated does not mean there is no way to do it democratically. It would just be complicated. In fact, anarchists have all sorts of different ideas and visions about how a complex society might manage itself. To explain them though would go far beyond the scope of a little introductory text like this. Suffice it to say, first of all, that a lot of people have spent a lot of time coming up with models for how a really democratic, healthy society might work; but second, and just as importantly,

no anarchist claims to have a perfect blueprint. The last thing we want is to impose prefab models on society anyway. The truth is we probably can't even imagine half the problems that will come up when we try to create a democratic society; still, we're confident that, human ingenuity being what it is, such problems can always be solved, so long as it is in the spirit of our basic principles — which are, in the final analysis, simply the principles of fundamental human decency.

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On Fascism? – Robert Paxton

From “What is Fascism” in *The Anatomy of Fascism* by Robert Paxton

At this book's opening, I ducked the task of offering the reader a neat definition of fascism. I wanted to set aside—for heuristic purposes, at least—the traditional but straitjacketing search for the famous but elusive “fascist minimum.” I thought it more promising to observe historical examples of fascist successes and failures in action, through a whole cycle of development. Exposing the processes by which fascisms appeared, grew, gained power (or not), and, once in power, radicalized into a “fascist maximum” seemed a more promising strategy than to search for some static and limiting “essence.”

Now that we have reached the end of this historical journey, the imperative of definition can no longer be evaded. Otherwise we risk escaping from the nominalism of the “bestiary” only to fall into another nominalism of stages and processes. Generic fascism might disappear in our efforts to pick it apart. But first some other issues need to be considered.

Following fascism through five stages, in each of which it acts differently, raises an awkward question: Which is the real fascism? For some authors, usually those most concerned with fascism's intellectual expressions, the early movements are “pure”

fascism while the regimes are corruptions, deformed by the compromises necessary for achieving and wielding power.¹ The regimes, however, for all their pragmatic choices and compromising alliances, had more impact than the movements because they possessed the power of war and death. A definition that does full justice to the phenomenon of fascism must apply to the later stages as effectively as it does to the earlier ones.

Focusing on those later stages requires us to give as much attention to settings and to allies as to the fascists themselves. A usable definition of fascism must also, therefore, find a way to avoid treating fascism in isolation, cut off from its environment and its accomplices. Fascism in power is a compound, a powerful amalgam of different but marriageable conservative, national-socialist and radical Right ingredients, bonded together by common enemies and common passions for a regenerated, energized, and purified nation at whatever cost to free institutions and the rule of law. The precise proportions of the mixture are the result of processes: choices, alliances, compromises, rivalries. Fascism in action looks much more like a network of relationships than a fixed essence.²

Conflicting Interpretations

Now that we have watched fascism in action through its entire cycle, we are better prepared to evaluate the many interpretations proposed over the years. The “first takes” I noted in chapter 1—thugs in power and agents of capitalism³—have never lost their grip. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht even managed to combine them in his Chicago gangster Arturo Ui, who gets power through a protection racket for vegetable sellers.⁴

Both “first takes,” however, had serious flaws. If fascism and its aggressions are simply the evil actions of hoodlums reaching power in an era of moral decline, we have no explanation for why this happened at one place and time rather than another, or how these events might relate to an earlier history. It was difficult for classical liberals like Croce and Meinecke to perceive that part of fascism’s opportunity lay in the dessication and narrowness of liberalism itself, or that some frightened liberals had helped it into power. Their version leaves us with chance and the individual exploits of thugs as explanations.

Considering fascism simply as a capitalist tool sends us astray in two respects. The narrow and rigid formula that became orthodox in Stalin’s Third International⁵ denied fascism’s autonomous roots and authentic popular appeal.⁶ Even worse, it ignored human choice by making fascism the inevitable outcome of the ineluctable crisis of capitalist overproduction. Closer empirical work showed, to the contrary, that real capitalists, even

when they rejected democracy, mostly preferred authoritarians to fascists.⁷ Whenever fascists reached power, to be sure, capitalists mostly accommodated with them as the best available nonsocialist solution. We had occasion to see that even the giant German chemical combine G. Farben, whose ascent to the rank of the biggest company in Europe had been based on global trade, found ways to adapt to rearmament-driven autarky, and prospered mightily again.⁸ The relations of accommodation, foot dragging, and mutual advantage that bound the business community to fascist regimes turn out to be another complicated matter that varied over time. That there was some mutual advantage is beyond doubt. Capitalism and fascism made practicable bedfellows (though not inevitable ones, nor always comfortable ones).

As for the opposite interpretation that portrays the business community as fascism's victim,⁹ it takes far too seriously the middle-level frictions endemic to this relationship, along with businessmen's postwar efforts at self-exculpation. Here, too, we need a subtler model of explanation that allows for interplays of conflict and accommodation.

Quite early the "first takes" were joined by other interpretations. The obviously obsessive character of some fascists cried out for psychoanalysis. Mussolini seemed only too ordinary, with his vain posturing, his notorious womanizing, his addiction to detailed work, his skill at short-term maneuvering, and his eventual loss of the big picture. Hitler was another matter. Were his *Teppichfresser* ("carpet eater") scenes calculated bluffs or signs of madness?¹⁰ His secretiveness, hypochondria, narcissism, vengefulness, and megalomania were counterbalanced by a quick, retentive mind, a capacity to charm if he wanted to, and outstanding tactical cleverness. All efforts to psychoanalyze him¹¹ have suffered from the inaccessibility of their subject, as well as from the unanswered question of why, if some fascist leaders were insane, their publics adored them and they functioned effectively for so long. In any event, the latest and most authoritative biographer of Hitler concludes rightly that one must dwell less on the *Führer*'s eccentricities than on the role the German public projected upon him and which he succeeded in filling until nearly the end.¹²

Perhaps it is the fascist publics rather than their leaders who need psychoanalysis. Already in 1933 the dissident Freudian Wilhelm Reich concluded that the violent masculine fraternity characteristic of early fascism was the product of sexual repression.¹³ This theory is easy to undermine, however, by observing that sexual repression was probably no more severe in Germany and in Italy than in, say, Great Britain during the generation in which the fascist leaders and their followers came of age.¹⁴ This objection also applies to other psycho-historical explanations for fascism.

Explanations of fascism as psychotic appear in another form in films that cater to a

prurient fascination with supposed fascist sexual perversion.¹⁵ These box-office successes make it even harder to grasp that fascist regimes functioned because great numbers of ordinary people accommodated to them in the ordinary business of daily life.¹⁶

The sociologist Talcott Parsons suggested already in 1942 that fascism emerged out of uprooting and tensions produced by uneven economic and social development—an early form of the fascism/modernization problem. In countries that industrialized rapidly and late, like Germany and Italy, Parsons argued, class tensions were particularly acute and compromise was blocked by surviving pre-industrial elites.¹⁷ This interpretation had the merit of treating fascism as a system and as the product of a history, as did the Marxist interpretation, without Marxism's determinism, narrowness, and shaky empirical foundations.

The philosopher Ernst Bloch, a Marxist made unorthodox by an interest in the irrational and in religion, arrived in his own way at another theory of “noncontemporaneity” (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*). Contemplating Nazi success with archaic and violent “red dreams” of blood, soil, and a precapitalist paradise, utterly incompatible with what he considered the party's true fealty to big business, he understood that vestigial values flourished long after they had lost any correspondence with economic and social reality. “Not all people exist in the same Now.” Orthodox Marxists, he thought, had missed the boat by “cordoning off the soul.”¹⁸ Uneven development continues to arouse interest as an ingredient of prefascist crises,¹⁹ but the case for it is weakened by France's notoriously “dual” economy, in which a powerful peasant/artisan sector coexisted with modern industry without fascism reaching power except under Nazi occupation.²⁰

Another sociological approach alleged that urban and industrial leveling since the late nineteenth century had produced an atomized mass society in which purveyors of simple hatreds found a ready audience unrestrained by tradition or community.²¹ Hannah Arendt worked within this paradigm in her analysis of how the new rootless mob, detached from all social, intellectual, or moral moorings and inebriated by anti-Semitic and imperialistic passions, made possible the emergence of an unprecedented form of limitless mass-based plebiscitary dictatorship.²²

The best empirical work on the way fascism took root, however, gives little support to this approach. Weimar German society, for example, was richly structured, and Nazism recruited by mobilizing entire organizations through carefully targeted appeals to specific interests.²³ As the saying went, “two Germans, a discussion; three Germans, a club.” The fact that German clubs for everything from choral singing to funeral insurance were already segregated into separate socialist and nonsocialist networks facilitated the exclusion of

the socialists and the Nazi takeover of the rest when Germany became deeply polarized in the early 1930s.²⁴

An influential current considers fascism a developmental dictatorship, established for the purpose of hastening industrial growth through forced savings and a regimented workforce. Proponents of this interpretation have looked primarily at the Italian case.²⁵ It could well be argued that Germany, too, although already an industrial giant, needed urgently to discipline its people for the immense task of rebuilding after the defeat of 1918. This interpretation goes seriously wrong, however, in supposing that fascism pursued any rational economic goal whatever. Hitler meant to bend the economy to serve political ends. Even in Mussolini's case, prestige counted far more than economic rationality when he overvalued the lira in 1926, and when, after 1935, he chose the risks of expansionist war over sustained economic development. If Italian Fascism was meant to be a developmental dictatorship, it failed at it. Though the Italian economy grew in the 1920s under Mussolini, it grew substantially faster before 1914 and after 1945.²⁶ In one genuinely aberrant form, the developmental dictatorship theory of fascism serves to label as "fascist" all sorts of Third World autocracies without an iota of popular mobilization and without the prior existence of a democracy in trouble.²⁷

It has also been tempting to interpret fascism by its social composition. The sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset systematized in 1963 the widely held view that fascism is an expression of lower-middle-class resentments. In Lipset's formulation, fascism is an "extremism of the center" based on the rage of once-independent shopkeepers, artisans, peasants, and other members of the "old" middle classes now squeezed between better-organized industrial workers and big businessmen, and losing out in rapid social and economic change.²⁸ Recent empirical research, however, casts doubt on the localization of fascist recruitment in any one social stratum. It shows the multiplicity of fascism's social supports and its relative success in creating a composite movement that cut across all classes.²⁹ His eyes glued on the early stages, Lipset also overlooked the establishment's role in the fascist acquisition and exercise of power.

The notorious instability of fascist membership further undermines any simple interpretation by social composition. Party rosters altered rapidly before power, as successive waves of heterogeneous malcontents responded to the parties' changing fortunes and messages.³⁰ After power, membership "bandwagoned" to include just about everyone who wanted to enjoy the fruits of fascist success³¹—not to forget the problem of where to situate the many fascist recruits who were young, unemployed, socially uprooted, or otherwise "between classes."³² No coherent social explanation of fascism can be constructed out of such fluctuating material.

A multitude of observers sees fascism as a subspecies of totalitarianism. Giovanni Amendola, a leader of the parliamentary opposition to Fascism and one of its most notable victims (he died in 1926 following a beating by Fascist thugs), coined the adjective *totalitaria* in a May 1923 article denouncing Fascist efforts to monopolize public office. Other opponents of Mussolini quickly broadened the term into a general condemnation of Fascist aspirations to total control. As sometimes happens with epithets, Mussolini took this one up and gloried in it.³³

Considering how often Mussolini boasted of his *totalitarismo*, it is ironic that some major postwar theorists of totalitarianism exclude Italian Fascism from their typology.³⁴ One must concede that Mussolini's regime, eager to "normalize" its rapport with a society in which the family, the Church, the monarchy, and the village notable still had entrenched power, fell far short of total control. Even so, Fascism regimented Italians more firmly than any regime before or since.³⁵ But no regime, not even Hitler's or Stalin's, ever managed to pinch off every last parcel of privacy and personal or group autonomy.³⁶

The 1950s theorists of totalitarianism believed that Hitler and Stalin fit their model most closely. Both Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, according to the criteria developed by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski in 1956, were governed by single parties employing an official ideology, terroristic police control, and a monopoly of power over all means of communication, armed force, and economic organization.³⁷ During the rebellious 1960s, a new generation accused the totalitarianism theorists of serving cold war ends, by transferring the patriotic antiNazism of World War II to the new communist enemy.³⁸

While its scholarly use declined thereafter for a time in the United States, the totalitarian paradigm remained important to those European scholars, particularly in West Germany, who wanted to affirm, against the Marxists, that what had really mattered about Hitler was his destruction of liberty, not his relation to capitalism.³⁹ At the end of the twentieth century, after the demise of the Soviet Union had prompted renewed scrutiny of its sins and of many Western intellectuals' blindness to them, the totalitarian model came back into vogue, along with its corollary that Nazism and communism represented a common evil.⁴⁰

Thus the totalitarian interpretation of fascism has been as hotly politicized as the Marxist one.⁴¹ Even so, it should be debated on its merits and not with respect to its enlistment by one camp or another. It purports to explain Nazism (and Stalinism) by focusing on their aspiration to total control, and on the tools by which they sought to exert it. No doubt Nazi and communist mechanisms of control had many similarities. Awaiting the knock in the night and rotting in a camp must have felt very similar to both systems'

sufferers (Jews and Gypsies apart, of course).⁴² In both regimes, law was subordinated to “higher” imperatives of race or class. Focusing upon the techniques of control, however, obscures important differences.

However similar it might feel, from the victim’s point of view, to die of typhus, malnutrition, exhaustion, or harsh questioning in one of Stalin’s Siberian camps or in, say, Hitler’s Mauthausen stone quarry, Stalin’s regime differed profoundly from Hitler’s in social dynamics as well as in aims. Stalin ruled a civil society that had been radically simplified by the Bolshevik Revolution, and thus he did not have to concern himself with autonomous concentrations of inherited social and economic power. Hitler (totally unlike Stalin) came into power with the assent and even assistance of traditional elites, and governed in strained but effective association with them. In Nazi Germany the party jostled with the state bureaucracy, industrial and agricultural proprietors, churches, and other traditional elites for power. Totalitarian theory is blind to this fundamental character of the Nazi governing system, and thus tends to fortify the elites’ postwar claim that Hitler tried to destroy them (as indeed the final cataclysm of the lost war began to do).

Hitlerism and Stalinism also differed profoundly in their declared ultimate aims—for one, the supremacy of a master race; for the other, universal equality—though Stalin’s egregious and barbarous perversions tended to make his regime converge with Hitler’s in its murderous instruments. Focusing upon central authority, the totalitarian paradigm overlooks the murderous frenzy that boiled from below in fascism.

Treating Hitler and Stalin together as totalitarians often becomes an exercise in comparative moral judgment: Which monster was more monstrous?⁴³ Were Stalin’s two forms of mass murder—reckless economic experiment and the paranoid persecution of “enemies”—the moral equivalent of Hitler’s attempt to purify his nation by exterminating the medically and racially impure?⁴⁴

The strongest case for equating Stalin’s terror with Hitler’s is the famine of 1931, which, it is alleged, targeted Ukrainians and thus amounted to genocide. This famine, though indeed the result of criminal negligence, affected Russians with equal severity.⁴⁵ Opponents would note fundamental differences. Stalin killed in grossly arbitrary fashion whomever his paranoid mind decided were “class enemies” (a condition one can change), in a way that struck mostly at adult males among the dictator’s fellow citizens. Hitler, by contrast, killed “race enemies,” an irremediable condition that condemns even newborns. He wanted to liquidate entire peoples, including their tombstones and their cultural artifacts. This book acknowledges the repugnance of both terrors, but condemns even more strongly Nazi biologically racist extermination because it admitted no salvation even

for women and children.⁴⁶

A more pragmatic criticism of the totalitarian model complains that its image of an efficient all-encompassing mechanism prevents us from grasping the disorderly character of Hitler's rule, which reduced government to personal fiefdoms unable to discuss policy options and choose among them rationally.⁴⁷ Mussolini, assuming multiple cabinet ministries himself but unable to impose orderly priorities on any of them, did no better. The totalitarian image may evoke powerfully the dreams and aspirations of dictators, but it actually obstructs any examination of the vital matter of how effectively fascist regimes managed to embed themselves in the half-compliant, half-recalcitrant societies they ruled.

The older concept of political religion—it dates to the French Revolution—was quickly applied to fascism, as well as to communism, and not only by their enemies.⁴⁸ At the level of broad analogy, it points usefully to the way fascism, like religion, mobilized believers around sacred rites and words, excited them to self-denying fervor, and preached a revealed truth that admitted no dissidence. Scrutinized more carefully,⁴⁹ the concept of political religion turns out to encompass several quite different issues. The most straightforward one is the many elements that fascism borrows from the religious culture of the society it seeks to penetrate. With its focus upon mechanisms, this subject tells us more about taking root and about exercising power than about achieving power.

A second element of the political religion concept is the more challenging functional argument that fascism fills a void opened by the secularization of society and morality.⁵⁰ If this approach is meant to help explain why fascism succeeded in some Christian countries rather than others, it requires us to believe that the “ontological crisis” was more severe in Germany and Italy than in France and Britain in the early twentieth century—a case that might be difficult to make.

It also suggests that established religions and fascism are irreconcilable opponents—a third element of the political religion concept. In Germany and Italy, however, the two had a complex relationship that did not exclude cooperation. They joined forces against communism while competing for the same terrain. While this situation led to a *modus vivendi* in the Italian case, it generated a “destructive mimesis of Christianity”⁵¹ in the Nazi case. At the opposite extreme, fascism could produce something resembling an unauthorized Christian auxiliary in the Romanian, Croat, and Belgian cases and an Islamic auxiliary, if we accept as fascist some extra-European movements I considered in chapter 7.

The fascist leaders themselves, as we observed in chapter 1, called their movements

ideologies, and many interpreters have taken them at their word. It is commonplace to see fascism defined by extracting common threads from party programs, by analogy with the other “isms.” This works better for the other “isms,” founded in the era of educated elite politics. I tried earlier to suggest that fascism bears a different relation to ideas than the nineteenth-century “isms,” and that intellectual positions (not basic mobilizing passions like racial hatreds, of course) were likely to be dropped or added according to the tactical needs of the moment. All the “isms” did this, but only fascism had such contempt for reason and intellect that it never even bothered to justify its shifts.⁵²

Nowadays cultural studies are replacing intellectual history as the strategy of choice for elucidating the attraction and efficacy of fascism.⁵³ As early as World War II, the American ethnographer Gregory Bateson employed “the sort of analysis that an anthropologist applies to the mythology of a primitive or modern people” to pick apart the themes and techniques of the Nazi propaganda film *Hitler Youth Quex*. Bateson believed that “this film . . . must tell us about the psychology of its makers, and tell us perhaps more than they intended to tell.”⁵⁴ Since the 1970s and increasingly today, decoding the culture of fascist societies by an anthropological or ethnographical gaze has become a fashionable intellectual strategy. It shows vividly how fascist movements and regimes presented themselves. The main problem with cultural studies of fascist imagery and rhetoric is their frequent failure to ask how influential these were. This rule has important exceptions, such as Luisa Passerini’s study of the popular memory of Fascism in the Italian city of Turin in the 1980s.⁵⁵ Generally, however, the study of fascist culture by itself does not explain how fascists acquired the power to control culture, nor how deeply into popular consciousness fascist culture penetrated in competition with either preexisting religious, familial, or community values or with commercialized popular culture.

In any event, culture differs so profoundly from one national setting and one period to another that it is hard to find any cultural program common to all fascist movements, or to all the stages. The *macho* restoration of a threatened patriarchy, for example, comes close to being a universal fascist value, but Mussolini advocated female suffrage in his first program, and Hitler did not mention gender issues in his 25 Points. Since Mussolini favored the avant-garde, at least until the 1930s, while Hitler preferred conventional postcard art, it is unlikely that we can identify a single immutable fascist style or aesthetic that would apply to all the national cases.⁵⁶

A less-often-mentioned problem with cultural studies of fascism arises from their failure to make comparisons. Comparison is essential, and it reveals that some countries with a powerful cultural preparation (France, for example) became fascist only by conquest (if

then). The effect of fascist propaganda also needs to be compared with that of commercial media, which was clearly greater even in fascist countries. Hollywood, Beale Street, and Madison Avenue probably gave more trouble to fascist dreams of cultural control than the whole liberal and socialist opposition put together.⁵⁷ The handwriting was on the wall for those dreams one day in 1937 when Mussolini's oldest son, Vittorio, gave his youngest brother Romano a picture of Duke Ellington, and started the boy down the road to a postwar career as a rather good jazz pianist.⁵⁸

All in all, no one interpretation of fascism seems to have carried the day decisively to everyone's satisfaction.

Boundaries

We cannot understand fascism well without tracing clear boundaries with superficially similar forms. The task is difficult because fascism was widely imitated, especially during the 1930s, when Germany and Italy seemed more successful than the democracies. Borrowings from fascism turned up as far away from their European roots as Bolivia and China.⁵⁹

The simplest boundary separates fascism from classical tyranny. The exiled moderate socialist Gaetano Salvemini, having abandoned his chair as professor of history at Florence and moved to London and then to Harvard because he could not bear to teach without saying what he thought, pointed to the essential difference when he wondered why "Italians felt the need to get rid of their free institutions" at the very moment when they should be taking pride in them, and when they "should step forward toward a more advanced democracy."⁶⁰ Fascism, for Salvemini, meant setting aside democracy and due process in public life, to the acclamation of the street. It is a phenomenon of failed democracies, and its novelty was that, instead of simply clamping silence upon citizens as classical tyranny had done since earliest times, it found a technique to channel their passions into the construction of an obligatory domestic unity around projects of internal cleansing and external expansion. We should not use the term *fascism* for predemocratic dictatorships. However cruel, they lack the manipulated mass enthusiasm and demonic energy of fascism, along with the mission of "giving up free institutions" for the sake of national unity, purity, and force.

Fascism is easily confused with military dictatorship, for both fascist leaders militarized their societies and placed wars of conquest at the very center of their aims. Guns⁶¹ and uniforms were a fetish with them. In the 1930s, fascist militias were all uniformed (as, indeed, were socialist militias in that colored-shirt era),⁶² and fascists have always

wanted to turn society into an armed fraternity. Hitler, newly installed as chancellor of Germany, made the mistake of dressing in a civilian trenchcoat and hat when he went to Venice on June 14, 1934, for his first meeting with the more senior Mussolini, “resplendent with uniform and dagger.”⁶³ Thereafter the *Führer* appeared in uniform on public occasions—sometimes a brown party jacket, later often an unadorned military tunic. But while all fascisms are always militaristic, military dictatorships are not always fascist. Most military dictators have acted simply as tyrants, without daring to unleash the popular excitement of fascism. Military dictatorships are far commoner than fascisms, for they have no necessary connection to a failed democracy and have existed since there have been warriors.

The boundary separating fascism from authoritarianism is more subtle, but it is one of the most essential for understanding.⁶⁴ I have already used the term, or the similar one of traditional dictatorship, in discussing Spain, Portugal, Austria, and Vichy France. The fascist-authoritarian boundary was particularly hard to trace in the 1930s, when regimes that were, in reality, authoritarian donned some of the decor of that period’s successful fascisms. Although authoritarian regimes often trample civil liberties and are capable of murderous brutality, they do not share fascism’s urge to reduce the private sphere to nothing. They accept ill-defined though real domains of private space for traditional “intermediary bodies” like local notables, economic cartels and associations, officer corps, families, and churches. These, rather than an official single party, are the main agencies of social control in authoritarian regimes. Authoritarians would rather leave the population demobilized and passive, while fascists want to engage and excite the public.⁶⁵ Authoritarians want a strong but limited state. They hesitate to intervene in the economy, as fascism does readily, or to embark on programs of social welfare. They cling to the status quo rather than proclaim a new way.⁶⁶

General Francisco Franco, for example, who led the Spanish army in revolt against the Spanish republic in July 1936 and became the dictator of Spain in 1939, clearly borrowed some aspects of rule from his ally Mussolini. He called himself *Caudillo* (leader) and made the fascist Falange the only party. During World War II and after, the Allies treated Franco as a partner of the Axis. That impression was fortified by the bloodiness of the Franquist repression, which may have killed as many as two hundred thousand people between 1939 and 1945, and by the regime’s efforts to close down cultural and economic contact with the outside world.⁶⁷ In April 1945 Spanish officials attended a memorial mass for Hitler. A month later, however, the *Caudillo* explained to his followers that “it was necessary to lower some of the [Falange’s] sails.”⁶⁸

Thereafter Franco’s Spain,⁶⁹ always more Catholic than fascist, built its authority upon

traditional pillars such as the Church, big landowners, and the army, essentially charging them instead of the state or the everweaker Falange with social control. Franco's state intervened little in the economy, and made little effort to regulate the daily life of people as long as they were passive.

The Estado Novo of Portugal⁷⁰ differed from fascism even more profoundly than Franco's Spain. Salazar was, in effect, the dictator of Portugal, but he preferred a passive public and a limited state where social power remained in the hands of the Church, the army, and the big landowners. In July 1934, Dr. Salazar actually suppressed an indigenous Portuguese fascist movement, National Syndicalism, accusing it of "exaltation of youth, the cult of force through so-called direct action, the principle of the superiority of state political power in social life, the propensity for organizing the masses behind a political leader"—not a bad description of fascism.⁷¹

Vichy France, the regime that replaced the parliamentary republic after the defeat of 1940,⁷² was certainly not fascist at the outset, for it had neither a single party nor parallel institutions. A governing system in which France's traditional select civil service ran the state, with enhanced roles for the military, the Church, technical experts, and established economic and social elites, falls clearly into the authoritarian category. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 brought the French Communist Party into open resistance and obliged the German occupation to become much harsher in order to support total war, Vichy and its policy of collaboration with Nazi Germany faced mounting opposition. Parallel organizations appeared in the fight against the Resistance: the *Milice* or supplementary police, "special sections" of the law courts for expeditious trials of dissidents, the Police for Jewish Affairs. But even though, as we saw in chapter 4, a few Paris fascists were given important posts at Vichy in the last days of the regime, they served as individuals rather than as chiefs of an official single party.

A Working Definition of Fascism

The moment has come to give fascism a usable short handle, even though we know that it encompasses its subject no better than a snapshot encompasses a person.

Fascism may be defined as a form of political behavior marked by obsessive preoccupation with community decline, humiliation, or victimhood and by compensatory cults of unity, energy, and purity, in which a mass-based party of committed nationalist militants, working in uneasy but effective collaboration with traditional elites, abandons democratic liberties and pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion.

To be sure, political behavior requires choices, and choices—as my critics hasten to point out—bring us back to underlying ideas. Hitler and Mussolini, scornful of the “materialism” of socialism and liberalism, insisted on the centrality of ideas to their movements. Not so, retorted many antifascists who refuse to grant them such dignity. “National Socialism’s ideology is constantly shifting,” Franz Neumann observed. “It has certain magical beliefs—leadership adoration, supremacy of the master race—but [it] is not laid down in a series of categorical and dogmatic pronouncements.”⁷³ On this point, this book is drawn toward Neumann’s position, and I examined at some length in chapter 1 the peculiar relationship of fascism to its ideology—simultaneously proclaimed as central, yet amended or violated as expedient.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, fascists knew what they wanted. One cannot banish ideas from the study of fascism, but one can situate them accurately among all the factors that influence this complex phenomenon. One can steer between two extremes: fascism consisted neither of the uncomplicated application of its program, nor of freewheeling opportunism.

I believe that the ideas that underlie fascist actions are best deduced from those actions, for some of them remain unstated and implicit in fascist public language. Many of them belong more to the realm of visceral feelings than to the realm of reasoned propositions. In chapter 2 I called them “mobilizing passions”: a sense of overwhelming crisis beyond the reach of any traditional solutions;

- the primacy of the group, toward which one has duties superior to every right, whether individual or universal, and the subordination of the individual to it;
- the belief that one’s group is a victim, a sentiment that justifies any action, without legal or moral limits, against its enemies, both internal and external;
- dread of the group’s decline under the corrosive effects of individualistic liberalism, class conflict, and alien influences;
- the need for closer integration of a purer community, by consent if possible, or by exclusionary violence if necessary;
- the need for authority by natural chiefs (always male), culminating in a national chieftain who alone is capable of incarnating the group’s historical destiny;
- the superiority of the leader’s instincts over abstract and universal reason;
- the beauty of violence and the efficacy of will, when they are devoted to the group’s success;
- the right of the chosen people to dominate others without restraint from any kind of human or divine law, right being decided by the sole criterion of the group’s prowess within a Darwinian struggle.

Fascism according to this definition, as well as behavior in keeping with these feelings, is

still visible today. Fascism exists at the level of Stage One within all democratic countries—not excluding the United States. “Giving up free institutions,” especially the freedoms of unpopular groups, is recurrently attractive to citizens of Western democracies, including some Americans. We know from tracing its path that fascism does not require a spectacular “march” on some capital to take root; seemingly anodyne decisions to tolerate lawless treatment of national “enemies” is enough. Something very close to classical fascism has reached Stage Two in a few deeply troubled societies. Its further progress is not inevitable, however. Further fascist advances toward power depend in part upon the severity of a crisis, but also very largely upon human choices, especially the choices of those holding economic, social, and political power. Determining the appropriate responses to fascist gains is not easy, since its cycle is not likely to repeat itself blindly. We stand a much better chance of responding wisely, however, if we understand how fascism succeeded in the past.

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On Our Four Futures – Peter Frase

From “Introduction” from *Four Futures* by Peter Frase

Two specters are haunting Earth in the twenty-first century: the specters of ecological catastrophe and automation.

In 2013, a US government observatory recorded that global concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide had reached 400 parts per million for the first time in recorded history.¹ This threshold, which the Earth had not passed in as many as 3 million years, heralds accelerating climate change over the coming century. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts diminishing sea ice, acidification of the oceans, and increasing frequency of droughts and extreme storm events.²

At the same time, news of technological breakthroughs in the context of high

unemployment and stagnant wages has produced anxious warnings about the effects of automation on the future of work. In early 2014, Massachusetts Institute of Technology professors Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee published *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*.³ They surveyed a future in which computer and robotics technology replaces human labor not just in traditional domains such as agriculture and manufacturing, but also in sectors ranging from medicine and law to transportation. At Oxford University, a research unit released a widely publicized report estimating that nearly half the jobs in the United States today are vulnerable to computerization.⁴

These twin anxieties are in many ways diametrical opposites. The fear of climate change is a fear of having too little: it anticipates a scarcity of natural resources, the loss of agricultural land and habitable environments—and ultimately the demise of an Earth that can support human life. The fear of automation is, perversely, a fear of too *much*: a fully robotized economy that produces so much, with so little human labor, that there is no longer any need for workers. Can we really be facing a crisis of scarcity and a crisis of abundance at the same time?

The argument of this book is that we are in fact facing such a contradictory dual crisis. And it is the interaction of these two dynamics that makes our historical moment so volatile and uncertain, full of both promise and danger. In the chapters that follow, I will attempt to sketch some of the possible interactions between these two dynamics.

First, however, I need to lay out the contours of current debates over automation and climate change.

Rise of the Robots

“Welcome Robot Overlords,” reads a feature headline published in 2013 by *Mother Jones* magazine, “Please Don’t Fire Us?”⁵ The article, by liberal pundit Kevin Drum, exemplifies a raft of coverage in recent years, surveying the rapid spread of automation and computerization throughout every part of the economy. These stories tend to veer between wonder and dread at the possibilities of all this new gadgetry. In stories like Drum’s, rapid progress in automation heralds the possibility of a world with a better quality of life and more leisure time for all; but alternatively, it heralds mass unemployment and the continued enrichment of the 1 percent.

This is not a new tension by any means. The folk tale of John Henry and the steam hammer, which originated in the nineteenth century, describes a railroad worker who tries to race against a steel powered drill and wins—only to drop dead from the effort. But

several factors have come together to accentuate worries about technology and its effect on labor. The persistently weak post-recession labor market has produced a generalized background anxiety about job loss. Automation and computerization are beginning to reach into professional and creative industries that long seemed immune, threatening the jobs of the very journalists who cover these issues. And the pace of change at least seems, to many, to be faster than ever.

The “second machine age” is a concept promoted by Brynjolfsson and McAfee. In their book of the same name, they argue that just as the first machine age—the Industrial Revolution—replaced human muscle with machine power, computerization is allowing us to greatly magnify, or even replace, “the ability to use our brains to understand and shape our environments.”⁶ In that book and its predecessor, *Race Against the Machine*, Brynjolfsson and McAfee argue that computers and robots are rapidly permeating every part of the economy, displacing labor from high- and low-skill functions alike. Central to their view is the processing of much of the world into digital information, with everything from books and music to street networks now available in a form that can be copied and transmitted around the world instantly and nearly for free.

The applications that this kind of data enables are enormously varied, especially in combination with advances in physical-world robotics and sensing. In a widely cited study using a detailed analysis of different occupations produced by the US Department of Labor, Oxford University researchers Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne speculated that 47 percent of current US employment is susceptible to computerization thanks to current technological developments.⁷ Stuart Elliott at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development uses the same source data but a different approach over a longer time frame and suggested that the figure could be as high as 80 percent. These figures are the result of both subjective classifying decisions and complex quantitative methodology, so it would be a mistake to put too much faith in any exact number. Nevertheless, it should be clear that the possibility of rapid further automation in the near future is very real.

Brynjolfsson and McAfee are perhaps the best-known prophets of rapid automation, but their work fits into an exploding genre. Software entrepreneur Martin Ford, for example, explores similar terrain in his 2015 work *Rise of the Robots*.⁸ He relies on much of the same literature and reaches many of the same conclusions about the pace of automation. His conclusions are somewhat more radical—a guaranteed universal basic income, which will be discussed later in this book, occupies a place of prominence; much of the rival literature, by contrast, offers little more than bromides about education.

That many people are writing about rapid and socially dislocating automation doesn’t

mean that it's an imminent reality. As I noted above, anxiety about labor-saving technology is actually a constant through the whole history of capitalism. But we do see many indications that we now have the *possibility*—although not necessarily the reality—of drastically reducing the need for human labor. A few examples will demonstrate the diverse areas in which human labor is being reduced or eliminated entirely.

In 2011, IBM made headlines with its Watson supercomputer, which successfully competed and won against human competitors on the game show *Jeopardy*. Although this feat was a somewhat frivolous publicity stunt, it also demonstrated Watson's suitability for other, more valuable tasks. The technology is already being tested to assist doctors in processing the enormous volume of medical literature to better diagnose patients, which in fact was the system's original purpose. But it is also being released as the "Watson Engagement Advisor," which is intended for customer service and technical support applications. By responding to free-form natural language queries from users, this software could potentially replace the call center workers (many in places like India) who currently perform this work. The review of legal documents, an extremely time-consuming process traditionally performed by legions of junior lawyers, is another promising application of the technology.

Another area of rapid advance is robotics, the interaction of machinery with the physical world. Over the twentieth century, great advances were made in the development of large-scale industrial robots, of the sort that could operate a car assembly line. But only recently have they begun to challenge the areas in which humans excel: fine-grained motor skills and the navigation of a complex physical terrain. The US Department of Defense is now developing computer-controlled sewing machines so as to avoid sourcing its uniforms from China.⁹ Until just the past few years, self-driving cars were regarded as well beyond the scope of our technical ability. Now the combination of sensor technology and comprehensive map databases is making it a reality in such projects as the Google self-driving fleet. Meanwhile a company called Locus Robotics has launched a robot that can process orders in giant warehouses, potentially replacing the workers for Amazon and other companies who currently toil in often brutal conditions.¹⁰

Automation continues to proceed even in agriculture, which once consumed the largest share of human labor but now makes up a tiny fraction of employment, especially in the United States and other rich countries. In California, changing Mexican economic conditions and border crackdowns have led to labor shortages. This has spurred farmers to invest in new machinery that can take on even delicate tasks like fruit harvesting, which have until now required the precision of a human hand.¹¹ This development illustrates a recurrent capitalist dynamic: as workers become more powerful and better

paid, the pressure on capitalists to automate increases. When there is a huge pool of low wage migrant farm labor, a \$100,000 fruit picker looks like a wasteful indulgence. But when workers are scarce and can command better wages, the incentive to replace them with machinery is intensified.

The trend toward automation runs through the entire history of capitalism. In recent years it was muted and somewhat disguised, because of the enormous injection of cheap labor that global capitalism received after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the turn toward capitalism in China. But now even Chinese companies are facing labor shortages and looking to new ways of automating and robotizing.

Innumerable further examples can be produced. Robot anesthesiologists to replace physicians. A hamburger-making machine that can replace the staff of a McDonald's. Large-scale 3-D printers that can turn out entire houses within a day. Each week brings strange new things.

Automation is liable to move beyond even this, into the oldest and most fundamental form of women's labor. In the 1970s, the radical feminist theorist Shulamith Firestone called for growing babies in artificial wombs, as a way to liberate women from their dominated position in the relations of reproduction.¹² Fanciful at the time, such technologies are becoming a reality today. Japanese scientists have successfully birthed goats from artificial wombs and grown human embryos for up to ten days. Further work on applying this technology to human babies is now as much restricted by law as science; Japan prohibits growing human embryos artificially for longer than fourteen days.¹³ Many women find such a prospect off-putting and welcome the experience of carrying a child. But surely many others would prefer to be liberated from the obligation.

Most of this book will take for granted the premise of the automation optimists, that within as little as a few decades we could live in a *Star Trek*—like world where, as Kevin Drum put it in *Mother Jones*, “robots can do everything humans can do, and they do it uncomplainingly, 24 hours a day,” and “scarcity of ordinary consumer goods is a thing of the past.”¹⁴ Such claims are likely to be hyperbole, which for the purposes of this book is fine: my approach is deliberately hyperbolic, sketching out simplified ideal types to illustrate fundamental principles. It's not important that absolutely *everything* will be done by robots, only that a large amount of the labor currently done by humans is in the process of being automated away.

But there remains much controversy over just how fast automation can proceed and what processes will be susceptible to it. So before delving into the possible social consequences of that process, I will sketch out some of the recent, rapid developments in the so-called

“second machine age” we live in. This is a sequel to—or, as some see it, merely an extension of—the first machine age of large-scale industrial automation.

Fear of a Mechanical Planet

Objections to the predictions and fears of wide-ranging automation fall into three broad categories. Some argue that reports of new technology are overhyped and overblown and that we are a long way from truly being able to replace human labor in most fields.

Others, following a traditional argument from mainstream economics, contend that past episodes of rapid productivity growth have simply opened up new kinds of work and new jobs, not led to massive unemployment, and that this time will be no different. Finally, some on the Left see an obsessive focus on futuristic automation scenarios as a distraction from more pressing political tasks such as government investment and stimulus and improved wages and conditions in the workplace.

Reports Of Labor’s Demise: Greatly Exaggerated?

Those who believe that technology is given exaggerated significance usually point to the published statistics on productivity growth. A large-scale adoption of robots and machinery ought to show up as a rapid increase in the statistics that measure the productivity of labor—that is, the amount of output that can be generated per worker. But in fact, the rate of productivity growth in recent years has been relatively low. In the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that from 2007 to 2014, the annual rate of change was only 1.4 percent. That’s a pace lower than at any time since the 1970s and half what was seen during the postwar boom years.

This leads some to argue that the anecdotal accounts of great breakthroughs in robotics and computation are misleading, because they aren’t actually being translated into economic results. The economists Tyler Cowen and Robert Gordon are most closely associated with this view.¹⁵ Doug Henwood, of the *Left Business Observer*, makes a similar case from the Left.¹⁶

For more conservative economists like Cowen and Gordon, the problem is largely technical. The new technologies aren’t really all that great, at least from an economic perspective, compared to breakthroughs like electricity or the internal combustion engine. We’ve picked the “low-hanging fruit,” in Cowen’s terms, and unless we find some more we’re doomed to slow growth for the foreseeable future.

Left critics, like Henwood and Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, locate our problems not in technology, but in policy. For them, blaming the

weak economic recovery after the 2008 recession on automation is a distraction from the real issue, which is that government policy has not been sufficiently focused on fiscal stimulus and job creation, thus preventing the economy from reaching full employment. Worries about robots are, from this point of view, both counter-factual (because productivity growth is low) and politically reactionary.

But others, including Brynjolfsson and McAfee, argue that even if no great fundamental breakthroughs are on the horizon, there is much to be gained from refining and recombining the breakthroughs we have already seen. This is a common historical pattern; many new techniques that were discovered during the Great Depression, for example, weren't economically fully exploited until the postwar boom. Moreover, even those changes that don't get reflected numerically in the Gross Domestic Product can still contribute to our social wealth—like the huge volume of information available freely and rapidly on the Internet, which has greatly increased my efficiency in writing this book.

To leftist critics of the automation narrative, we can offer a more complex answer: their analysis is narrowly correct but doesn't look far enough ahead. This is because the recent trends in productivity can also be read as reflections of a curious tension between the economy's short-term equilibrium and its long-term potential.

The first two recessions of the twenty-first century led to weak recoveries, characterized by stagnant wages and high unemployment. In that context, the existence of a large pool of unemployed and low-wage workers operates as a disincentive for employers to automate. After all, why replace a worker with a robot, if the worker is cheaper? But a corollary to this principle is that, if wages begin to rise and labor markets tighten, employers will start to turn to the new technologies that are currently being developed, rather than pay the cost of additional labor. As I argue in the following sections, the real impediments to tight labor markets are currently political, not technological.

Automation's Eternal Return

Mainstream economists have for generations made the same argument about the supposed danger that automation poses to labor. If some jobs are automated, they argue, labor is freed up for other, new, and perhaps better kinds of work. They point to agriculture, which once occupied most of the workforce but now occupies only about 2 percent of it in a country like the United States. The decline of agricultural employment freed up workers who would go into the factories and make up the great industrial manufacturing economy of the mid-twentieth century. And the subsequent automation and offshoring of manufacturing, in turn, led to the boom in the service sector.

Why, then, should today be any different? If a robot takes your job, something else will surely be on the horizon. Supporters of this position can point to previous waves of anxiety about automation, such as the one in the 1990s that produced works like Jeremy Rifkin's *The End of Work* and Stanley Aronowitz and Bill DeFazio's *The Jobless Future*.¹⁷ As early as 1948, the mathematician and cyberneticist Norbert Wiener warned in his book *Cybernetics* that in the "second, cybernetic industrial revolution," we were approaching a society in which "the average human being of mediocre attainments or less has nothing to sell that it is worth anyone's money to buy."¹⁸ While many jobs have indeed been lost to automation, and jobless rates have risen and fallen with the business cycle, the social crisis of extreme mass unemployment, which many of these authors anticipated, has failed to arrive.

Of course, this is the kind of argument that can only be made from a great academic height, while ignoring the pain and disruption caused to actual workers who are displaced, whether or not they can eventually find new work. And even some in the mainstream suspect that, perhaps, this time really is different. Nobel Prize–winner and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman is perhaps the most prominent person to give voice to these doubts.¹⁹ But the deeper problem with the traditional analysis is that it poses the process as a scientific inevitability when it is actually a social and political choice.

Today, most labor struggles turn on increasing wages and benefits or improving working conditions. But until the time of the Great Depression in the 1930s, socialist and labor movements struggled for, and won, progressive reductions in the length of the working day as well. In the nineteenth century, the ten-hour-day movement gave way to the eight-hour-day movement. Even in the 1930s, the American Federation of Labor supported a law to reduce the work week to thirty hours. But after World War II, for a variety of reasons, work reduction gradually disappeared from labor's agenda. The forty-hour (or more) week was taken for granted, and the question became merely how well it would be compensated.

This would have surprised the economist John Maynard Keynes, who speculated in the 1930s that people in our time would work as little as fifteen hours per week. That would mean working less than a third of the forty-hour work week that is still widely considered to be the standard. And yet productivity since Keynes's time has more than tripled, so it would have been possible to take that growth in the form of free time for the masses. This didn't happen, not because it isn't technically possible, but because of the outcomes of the political choices and social struggles of the twentieth century.

Some will argue that keeping our high working hours was worth it, because it made

possible all the trappings of our modern world that Keynes could never have imagined, such as smartphones, flat-screen televisions, and the Internet. Because when most people think about working shorter hours, they think that they will have to give up some of the trappings of our advanced capitalist society, things that they enjoy, like their smartphones and their televisions.

That might be true to some extent, depending on the degree of work reduction we're talking about. But reducing work time can also reduce the cost of living, because it gives us time to do things that we would otherwise have to pay someone else to do, and it reduces costs like commuting that we have to pay just in order to work. And beyond that, our current society is filled with work that doesn't add anything to human flourishing and exists only to enrich someone else's bottom line—things like the collection of student loans (which would not exist if education were free) and many big-bank positions that facilitate dangerous and destabilizing speculation.

In any case, if we were to decide to make work reduction a social priority, we could gradually reduce hours in line with increases in productivity, so that people could gradually work less and less, while enjoying the same standard of living. And while some might prefer to keep working more in order to accumulate more and more stuff, probably many others would not. Even if we can never reach the pure post-work utopia, we can certainly move closer to it. Decreasing the work week from forty hours to thirty would move us in that direction. So would something like a universal basic income, which guarantees a minimum payment to every citizen regardless of work or any of the other strings that are attached to traditional welfare plans.

Technophilia As A Technology Of Distraction

Even supposing that, in the long run, the political questions and possibilities raised by automation are real, a good argument can be made that we face more significant short-term challenges. As noted above, productivity growth, which gives an indication of the number of workers actually needed to run the economy, has in fact been quite weak in recent years. Moreover, the lack of job growth after recent economic recessions can plausibly be attributed not to robots, but to failures of government policy.

That's because in the short run, the lack of jobs can be attributed not to automation, but to a lack of what is known, in the economists' jargon, as aggregate demand. In other words, the reason employers don't hire more workers is because there aren't enough people buying their products, and the reason people aren't buying their products is because they don't have enough money—either because they don't have jobs or because their wages are too low.

The solution to this situation, according to traditional Keynesian economic theories, is for the government to increase demand by a combination of monetary policy (lowering interest rates), fiscal policy (government investment in job creation, for instance through building infrastructure), and regulation (such as a higher minimum wage). And while governments did lower interest rates after the Great Recession, they did not do so in combination with sufficient investment in job creation, leading to a “jobless recovery” in which output—that is, the quantity of goods and services produced—slowly began to grow again, but employment did not return to its prerecession levels.

I do not disagree that the traditional Keynesian remedies remain important and necessary, as far as they go. And I share the worry that, in some cases, the specter of the robot future is used by the political center and right to distract attention from the short-term problems of the unemployed, in order to make it seem as though mass unemployment and underemployment are simply inevitable.

But I still think it’s worth talking about what a more highly automated future could mean for all of us. That’s partly because, contrary to the skeptics, I do think that the possibility for further labor-saving technology is being rapidly developed, even if it isn’t yet finding its way into the economy in a way that’s reflected in the productivity statistics. And it’s also because even if the short-term obstacle of austerity economics and insufficient government stimulus is overcome, we still face the political question that we have faced ever since the industrial revolution: will new technologies of production lead to greater free time for all, or will we remain locked into a cycle in which productivity gains only benefit the few, while the rest of us work longer than ever?

The Spectre of Climate Crisis

Thus far, I’ve discussed only one of the challenges that I cited at the outset, the threat posed by technology that displaces workers. But the second, the ecological crisis, is at least as significant for the future of capitalism and of the human race. The scientific consensus about climate change is clear. Human carbon emissions are warming the atmosphere, leading to hotter temperatures, extreme weather, and shortages of water and other essential resources. Differences of opinion chiefly concern how serious the effects will be, how disruptive they will be to human civilization, and how (or whether) it will be possible to adjust to those disruptions.

Many readers will no doubt be thinking that this does not exhaust the limits of debate, for there are also those who deny the existence of human-caused climate change entirely. These people certainly exist, and they are backed by very deep-pocketed corporate

interests and have prominent advocates within major political parties. But it would be a mistake to take these people as proponents of a serious scientific debate. The small fringe of writers and scientists who promote denialist theories may or may not be sincere in their claims to pursue truth, but their funders must be regarded as cynics, whose actions promote a different agenda.

For as we will see in a later chapter, the key question surrounding climate change is not whether climate change is occurring, but rather who will survive the change. Even in the worst-case scenarios, scientists are not arguing that the Earth will become totally uninhabitable. What will happen—and is happening—is that struggles over space and resources will intensify as habitats degrade. In this context—and particularly in concert with the technological trends discussed above—it may be possible for a small elite to continue to pollute the planet, protecting their own comfort while condemning most of the world’s population to misery. It is that agenda, not any serious engagement with climate science, that drives corporate titans in the direction of denialism.

Not all capitalists are committed to denialism, however. Some who acknowledge the magnitude of climate change nevertheless insist that that we can trust the workings of the free market to deliver solutions. But while this is not in fact totally absurd, it is highly misleading. For the enlightened eco-capitalists turn out to not really be so different from the troglodyte denialists.

Entrepreneurs, we are assured, will find new green technologies that will move us away from fossil fuel dependence without government intervention. But in many cases, these innovations involve high-tech green solutions that are only accessible to the rich. At the same time, truly global solutions are rejected, even when, as in the case of taxing carbon, they are ostensibly “market” solutions. The initiatives that excite the eco-capitalists are, instead, fanciful projects of “geoengineering” that attempt to manipulate the climate, despite the uncertain efficacy and unknown side effects of such procedures. As with the Koch brothers and their denialist ilk, the eco-capitalists are concerned primarily with preserving the prerogatives and lifestyles of the elite, even if they put a more environmentalist veneer on this agenda.

I turn now to the specific purpose of this book.

Politics in Command

Why, the reader might ask, is it even necessary to write another book about automation and the postwork future? The topic has become an entire subgenre in recent years; Brynjolfsson and McAfee are just one example. Others include Ford’s *Rise of the Robots*

and articles from the *Atlantic*'s Derek Thompson, *Slate*'s Farhad Manjoo, and *Mother Jones*'s Kevin Drum.²⁰ Each insists that technology is rapidly making work obsolete, but they flail vainly at an answer to the problem of making sure that technology leads to shared prosperity rather than increasing inequality. At best, like Brynjolfsson and McAfee, they fall back on familiar liberal bromides: entrepreneurship and education will allow us all to thrive even if all of our current work is automated away.

The one thing missing from all these accounts, the thing I want to inject into this debate, is *politics*, and specifically *class struggle*. As Mike Konczal of the Roosevelt Institute has pointed out, these projections of a postwork future tend toward a hazy technocratic utopianism, a “forward projection of the Keynesian-Fordism of the past,” in which “prosperity leads to redistribution leads to leisure and public goods.”²¹ Thus, while the transition may be difficult in places, we should ultimately be content with accelerating technological development and reassure ourselves that all will be for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

This outlook ignores the central defining features of the society we currently live in: capitalist class and property relations. Who benefits from automation, and who loses, is ultimately a consequence not of the robots themselves, but of who owns them. Hence it is impossible to understand the unfolding of the ecological crisis and developments in automation without understanding a third crisis through which both are mediated, the crisis of the capitalist economy. For neither climate change nor automation can be understood as problems (or solutions) in and of themselves. What is so dangerous, rather, is the way they manifest themselves in an economy dedicated to maximizing profits and growth, and in which money and power are held in the hands of a tiny elite.

The growing inequality of wealth and income in the world has become an increasing focus of attention from activists, politicians, and pundits. Occupy Wall Street struck a chord with the slogan “we are the 99 percent,” drawing attention to the fact that almost all the gains from economic growth in recent decades have accrued to 1 percent or less of the population. Economist Thomas Piketty scored an improbable best seller with *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, a massive treatise about the history of wealth and the prospect of an increasingly unequal world.²²

The two crises I've described are fundamentally about inequality as well. They are about the distribution of scarcity and abundance, about who will pay the costs of ecological damage and who will enjoy the benefits of a highly productive, automated economy. There are ways to reckon with the human impact on the Earth's climate, and there are ways to ensure that automation brings material prosperity for all rather than impoverishment and desperation for most. But those possible futures will require a very

different kind of economic system than the one that became globally dominant by the late twentieth century.

Four Futures

In his three-hour meditation on the representation of Los Angeles in movies, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, film scholar Thom Andersen suggests that “if we can appreciate documentaries for their dramatic qualities, perhaps we can appreciate fiction films for their documentary revelations.”²³ This book tries to incorporate that insight.

This is not quite a normal work of nonfiction, but it also is not fiction, nor would I put myself in the genre of “futurism.” Rather, it is an attempt to use the tools of social science in combination with those of speculative fiction to explore the space of possibilities in which our future political conflicts will play out. Call it a type of “social science fiction.”

One way of differentiating social science from science fiction is that the first is about describing the world that is, while the second speculates about a world that might be. But really, both are a mixture of imagination and empirical investigation, put together in different ways. Both attempt to understand empirical facts and lived experience as something that is shaped by abstract—and not directly perceptible—structural forces.

Certain types of speculative fiction are more attuned than others to the particularities of social structure and political economy. In *Star Wars*, you don’t really care about the details of the galactic political economy. And when the author tries to flesh them out, as George Lucas did in his widely derided *Star Wars* prequel movies, it only gums up the story. In a world like *Star Trek*, on the other hand, these details actually matter. Even though *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* might superficially look like similar tales of space travel and swashbuckling, they are fundamentally different types of fiction. The former exists only for its characters and its mythic narrative, while the latter wants to root its characters in a richly and logically structured social world.

This is related to, but transcends, a distinction that is customarily made among science fiction fans, between “hard” and “soft” science fiction. The former is supposed to be more plausible by way of its grounding in present-day science. But this distinction reflects the biases of the genre’s traditional fan base and its fetishization of the natural sciences. The more important distinction, as just mentioned, is between the stories that take their world-building seriously, and those that don’t. What is called soft science fiction is sometimes just *Star Wars*-style adventure stories, but sometimes it makes much richer use of social science. Meanwhile many of the supposedly “harder” counterparts pair detailed exegeses of physics with naïve or utterly conventional understandings of social

relations and human behavior. Ken MacLeod's Fall Revolution novels, which tell a tale of political upheaval and space colonization, are rooted in his understanding of Marxist political economy and his personal background in the Scottish socialist movement of the 1970s. It is that grounding, rather than any particular insight into the physics of space travel or Martian terraforming, that gives the novels their "hardness."

Speculative fiction as a tool of social analysis and critique goes back at least as far as H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*—if not Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—but the field has grown particularly rich of late. In popular culture, this can be seen even in the enormous success of dystopian young adult fictions like *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*. But while such stories are fairly transparent allegories of the class society we already live in, it is not hard to find others who have pushed the boundary further, speculating about the long-term implications of present-day trends. The interface between the actual and the potential manifests itself most potently in the near-future fictions of those authors who place their stories just a few steps ahead of the present, like William Gibson in his early twenty-first-century series of novels (*Pattern Recognition*, *Spook Country*, *Zero History*) or Cory Doctorow in *Homeland* (and the forthcoming *Walkaway*). The significance of information technology, automation, surveillance, ecological destruction—themes that will echo throughout this book—recur in these novels.

The political implications of different imagined worlds have also begun to come to the fore. Charles Stross is both an author of social science fiction and a frequent blogger in a more social scientific mode. He has particularly criticized the popular "steampunk" subgenre. He notes that it presents a kind of idealized nineteenth century full of zeppelins and steam-powered gadgetry but glosses over the key social relations of that era: the Dickensian misery of the working class and the horrors of colonialism. But Stross, and others like Ken MacLeod and China Miéville, have used fictions about future, past, and alternative worlds to give a fuller picture of class and social conflict.

Fictional futures are, in my view, preferable to those works of "futurism" that attempt to directly predict the future, obscuring its inherent uncertainty and contingency and thereby stultifying the reader. Within the areas discussed in this book, a paradigmatic futurist would be someone like Ray Kurzweil, who confidently predicts that by 2049, computers will have achieved humanlike intelligence, with all manner of world-changing consequences.²⁴ Such prognostications generally end up unconvincing as prophecy and unsatisfying as fiction. Science fiction is to futurism what social theory is to conspiracy theory: an altogether richer, more honest, and more humble enterprise. Or to put it another way, it is always more interesting to read an account that derives the general from the particular (social theory) or the particular from the general (science fiction),

rather than attempting to go from the general to the general (futurism) or the particular to the particular (conspiracism).

Rosa Luxemburg, the great early twentieth-century socialist theorist and organizer, popularized a slogan: “Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.”²⁵ That’s truer today than it has ever been. In this book, I will suggest not two but four possible outcomes—two socialisms and two barbarisms, if you will. The four chapters that follow can be thought of as what the sociologist Max Weber called “ideal types”: simplified, pure models of how society can be organized, designed to illuminate a few key issues that confront us today and will confront us in the future—part social science, part science fiction. Real life, of course, is always much more complicated, but the point of an ideal type is to focus on specific issues, setting others aside.

The aim is to develop an understanding of our present moment and map the possible futures that lie ahead in stylized form. The basic assumption is that the trend toward increasing automation will continue in all domains of the economy. Moreover, I will not make the assumption that was made by most economists in the twentieth century: that even as some jobs are eliminated by mechanization, the market will automatically generate more than enough new jobs to make up for the loss.

In the spirit of working in ideal types, I will make the strongest assumption possible: *all* need for human labor in the production process can be eliminated, and it is possible to live a life of pure leisure while machines do all the work. In fact, this isn’t logically possible, if we’re imagining a world where the machines serve us rather than controlling us like those in the movie *The Matrix*. We will have to do at least a little work to manage and maintain the machines.

But I assume all human labor away to avoid entangling myself in a debate that has bedeviled the Left ever since the Industrial Revolution: how a postcapitalist society would manage labor and production, in the absence of capitalist bosses with control over the means of production. This is an important (and ongoing) debate, but the issues I’m concerned with will be clearer if I can set it aside. Thus, the constant in my equation is that technical change tends toward perfect automation.

If automation is the constant, ecological crisis and class power are the variables. The ecological question is, more or less, just how bad the effects of climate change and resource depletion will end up being. In the best case scenario, the shift to renewable energy will combine with new methods of ameliorating and reversing climate change, and it will in fact be possible to use all our robot technology to provide a high standard of

living for everyone. The spectrum, in other words, runs from scarcity to abundance.

The question of class power comes down to how we end up tackling the massive inequality of wealth, income, and political power in the world today. To the extent that the rich are able to maintain their power, we will live in a world where they enjoy the benefits of automated production, while the rest of us pay the costs of ecological destruction—if we can survive at all. To the extent that we can move toward a world of greater equality, then the future will be characterized by some combination of shared sacrifice and shared prosperity, depending on where we are on the other, ecological dimension.

So the model posits that we can end up in a world of either scarcity or abundance, alongside either hierarchy or equality. This makes for four possible combinations, which can be set up as a two-by-two grid.

	Abundance	Scarcity
Equality	communism	socialism
Hierarchy	rentism	exterminism

Exercises like this aren't unprecedented. A similar typology can be found in a 1999 article by Robert Costanza in *The Futurist*.²⁶ There are four scenarios: *Star Trek*, Big Government, *Ecotopia*, and *Mad Max*. For Costanza, however, the two axes are “world view and policies” and “the real state of the world.” Thus the four boxes are filled in according to whether human ideological predilections match reality: in the “Big Government” scenario, for example, progress is restrained by safety standards because the “technological skeptics” deny the reality of unlimited resources.

My contribution to this debate is to emphasize the significance of *capitalism* and *politics*. Both the possibility of ecological limits and the political constraints of a class society are, in this view, “material” constraints. And the interaction between them is what will determine our path forward.

The existence of capitalism as a system of class power, with a ruling elite that will try to preserve itself into any possible future, is therefore a central structuring theme of this book, a theme that I believe is absent from almost every other attempt to understand the trajectory of a highly automated postindustrial economy. Technological developments give a context for social transformations, but they never determine them directly; change is always mediated by the power struggles between organized masses of people. The

question is who wins and who loses, and not, as technocratic authors like Costanza would have it, who has the “correct” view of the objective nature of the world.

So for me, sketching out multiple futures is an attempt to leave a place for the political and the contingent. My intention is not to claim that one future will automatically appear through the magical working out of technical and ecological factors that appear from outside. Instead, it is to insist that where we end up will be a result of political struggle. The intersection of science fiction and politics is these days often associated with the libertarian right and its deterministic techno-utopian fantasies; I hope to reclaim the long left-wing tradition of mixing imaginative speculation with political economy.

The starting point of the entire analysis is that capitalism *is going to end*, and that, as Luxemburg said, it is either “transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.”²⁷ So this thought experiment is an attempt to make sense of the socialisms we may reach if a resurgent Left is successful, and the barbarisms we may be consigned to if we fail.

This doesn’t mean engaging in the secular eschatology that sets a firm end date on capitalism—too many socialists and apocalyptic preachers have made that mistake. It’s too simplistic to think of discrete endings in any case; labels for social systems like “capitalism” and “socialism” are abstractions, and there is never a single moment when we can definitively say that one turns into the other. My view is closer to the sociologist Wolfgang Streeck:

The image I have of the end of capitalism—an end that I believe is already under way—is one of a social system in chronic disrepair, for reasons of its own and regardless of the absence of a viable alternative. While we cannot know when and how exactly capitalism will disappear and what will succeed it, what matters is that no force is on hand that could be expected to reverse the three downward trends in economic growth, social equality and financial stability and end their mutual reinforcement.²⁸

[Ed. note: below, Frase sketches out the contours of the rest of the book, *Four Futures*.]

The four chapters that follow are each dedicated to one of the four futures: communism, rentism, socialism, and exterminism. In addition to sketching out a plausible future, each of those four chapters emphasizes a key theme that is relevant to the world we live in now, that would assume special importance in that particular future.

The chapter on communism dwells on the way we construct meaning when life is not centered around wage labor and what kind of hierarchies and conflicts arise in a world no

longer structured by the master narrative of capitalism. The depiction of rentism is largely a reflection on intellectual property and what happens when the private property form is applied to more and more of the immaterial patterns and concepts that guide our culture and economy. The story of socialism is a story about the climate crisis and our need to adapt to it, but also about the way in which some old leftist shibboleths about Nature and the Market impede us from seeing how neither the fetishization of the natural world nor the hatred of the market is necessarily sufficient, or even relevant, to the attempt to construct an ecologically stable world beyond capitalism. Finally, the tale of exterminism is the story of the militarization of the world, a phenomenon that encompasses everything from endless war in the Middle East to black teenagers being shot down by police on the streets of American cities.

We are already moving rapidly away from industrial capitalism as we understood it in the twentieth century, and there is little chance that we will move back in that direction. We are moving away into an uncertain future. I hope to provide a broad context for that future, but I do not want to create any sense of certainty. I follow David Brin, who has both written science fiction and gone by the “futurist” label, when he says that he is “much more interested in exploring possibilities than likelihoods, because a great many more things might happen than actually do.”²⁹

The importance of assessing possibility rather than likelihood is that it puts our collective action at the center, while making confident predictions only encourages passivity. In the same essay, Brin cites George Orwell’s *1984* as a “self-preventing prophecy” that helped prevent the scenario it described from coming true. In the wake of the War on Terror and former National Security Agency (NSA) analyst Edward Snowden’s disclosures about NSA surveillance, one can question just how self-preventing that particular prophecy was, but the general point stands.

If this book contributes in some small way to making the oppressive futures described self-preventing, and their egalitarian alternatives self-fulfilling, then it will have served its purpose.

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On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs – David Graeber

From "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs" by David Graeber in *Strike! Anthology*

In the year 1930, John Maynard Keynes predicted that, by century's end, technology would have advanced sufficiently that countries like Great Britain or the United States would have achieved a 15-hour work week. There's every reason to believe he was right. In technological terms, we are quite capable of this. And yet it didn't happen. Instead, technology has been marshaled, if anything, to figure out ways to make us all work more. In order to achieve this, jobs have had to be created that are, effectively, pointless. Huge swathes of people, in Europe and North America in particular, spend their entire working

lives performing tasks they secretly believe do not really need to be performed. The moral and spiritual damage that comes from this situation is profound. It is a scar across our collective soul. Yet virtually no one talks about it.

Why did Keynes' promised utopia—still being eagerly awaited in the '60s—never materialise? The standard line today is that he didn't figure in the massive increase in consumerism. Given the choice between less hours and more toys and pleasures, we've collectively chosen the latter. This presents a nice morality tale, but even a moment's reflection shows it can't really be true. Yes, we have witnessed the creation of an endless variety of new jobs and industries since the '20s, but very few have anything to do with the production and distribution of sushi, iPhones, or fancy sneakers.

So what are these new jobs, precisely? A recent report comparing employment in the US between 1910 and 2000 gives us a clear picture (and I note, one pretty much exactly echoed in the UK). Over the course of the last century, the number of workers employed as domestic servants, in industry, and in the farm sector has collapsed dramatically. At the same time, 'professional, managerial, clerical, sales, and service workers' tripled, growing 'from one-quarter to three-quarters of total employment.' In other words, productive jobs have, just as predicted, been largely automated away (even if you count industrial workers globally, including the toiling masses in India and China, such workers are still not nearly so large a percentage of the world population as they used to be.) But rather than allowing a massive reduction of working hours to free the world's population to pursue their own projects, pleasures, visions, and ideas, we have seen the ballooning of not even so much of the 'service' sector as of the administrative sector, up to and including the creation of whole new industries like financial services or telemarketing, or the unprecedented expansion of sectors like corporate law, academic and health administration, human resources, and public relations. And these numbers do not even reflect on all those people whose job is to provide administrative, technical, or security support for these industries, or for that matter the whole host of ancillary industries (dog-washers, all-night pizza delivery) that only exist because everyone else is spending so much of their time working in all the other ones.

These are what I propose to call 'bullshit jobs'. It's as if someone were out there making up pointless jobs just for the sake of keeping us all working. And here, precisely, lies the mystery. In capitalism, this is precisely what is not supposed to happen. Sure, in the old inefficient socialist states like the Soviet Union, where employment was considered both a right and a sacred duty, the system made up as many jobs as they had to (this is why in Soviet department stores it took three clerks to sell a piece of meat). But, of course, this is the sort of very problem market competition is supposed to fix. According to economic

theory, at least, the last thing a profit-seeking firm is going to do is shell out money to workers they don't really need to employ. Still, somehow, it happens.

While corporations may engage in ruthless downsizing, the layoffs and speed-ups invariably fall on that class of people who are actually making, moving, fixing and maintaining things; through some strange alchemy no one can quite explain, the number of salaried paper-pushers ultimately seems to expand, and more and more employees find themselves, not unlike Soviet workers actually, working 40 or even 50 hour weeks on paper, but effectively working 15 hours just as Keynes predicted, since the rest of their time is spent organizing or attending motivational seminars, updating their facebook profiles or downloading TV box-sets. The answer clearly isn't economic: it's moral and political. The ruling class has figured out that a happy and productive population with free time on their hands is a mortal danger (think of what started to happen when this even began to be approximated in the '60s). And, on the other hand, the feeling that work is a moral value in itself, and that anyone not willing to submit themselves to some kind of intense work discipline for most of their waking hours deserves nothing, is extraordinarily convenient for them.

Once, when contemplating the apparently endless growth of administrative responsibilities in British academic departments, I came up with one possible vision of hell. Hell is a collection of individuals who are spending the bulk of their time working on a task they don't like and are not especially good at. Say they were hired because they were excellent cabinet-makers, and then discover they are expected to spend a great deal of their time frying fish. Neither does the task really need to be done—at least, there's only a very limited number of fish that need to be fried. Yet somehow, they all become so obsessed with resentment at the thought that some of their co-workers might be spending more time making cabinets, and not doing their fair share of the fish-frying responsibilities, that before long there's endless piles of useless badly cooked fish piling up all over the workshop and it's all that anyone really does. I think this is actually a pretty accurate description of the moral dynamics of our own economy.

Now, I realise any such argument is going to run into immediate objections: 'who are you to say what jobs are really "necessary"? What's necessary anyway? You're an anthropology professor, what's the "need" for that?' (And indeed a lot of tabloid readers would take the existence of my job as the very definition of wasteful social expenditure.) And on one level, this is obviously true. There can be no objective measure of social value.

I would not presume to tell someone who is convinced they are making a meaningful contribution to the world that, really, they are not. But what about those people who are themselves convinced their jobs are meaningless? Not long ago I got back in touch with a

school friend who I hadn't seen since I was 12. I was amazed to discover that in the interim, he had become first a poet, then the front man in an indie rock band. I'd heard some of his songs on the radio having no idea the singer was someone I actually knew. He was obviously brilliant, innovative, and his work had unquestionably brightened and improved the lives of people all over the world. Yet, after a couple of unsuccessful albums, he'd lost his contract, and plagued with debts and a newborn daughter, ended up, as he put it, 'taking the default choice of so many directionless folk: law school.' Now he's a corporate lawyer working in a prominent New York firm. He was the first to admit that his job was utterly meaningless, contributed nothing to the world, and, in his own estimation, should not really exist.

There's a lot of questions one could ask here, starting with, what does it say about our society that it seems to generate an extremely limited demand for talented poet-musicians, but an apparently infinite demand for specialists in corporate law? (Answer: if 1% of the population controls most of the disposable wealth, what we call 'the market' reflects what they think is useful or important, not anybody else.) But even more, it shows that most people in these jobs are ultimately aware of it. In fact, I'm not sure I've ever met a corporate lawyer who didn't think their job was bullshit. The same goes for almost all the new industries outlined above. There is a whole class of salaried professionals that, should you meet them at parties and admit that you do something that might be considered interesting (an anthropologist, for example), will want to avoid even discussing their line of work entirely (one or t'other?) Give them a few drinks, and they will launch into tirades about how pointless and stupid their job really is.

This is a profound psychological violence here. How can one even begin to speak of dignity in labour when one secretly feels one's job should not exist? How can it not create a sense of deep rage and resentment. Yet it is the peculiar genius of our society that its rulers have figured out a way, as in the case of the fish-fryers, to ensure that rage is directed precisely against those who actually do get to do meaningful work. For instance: in our society, there seems a general rule that, the more obviously one's work benefits other people, the less one is likely to be paid for it. Again, an objective measure is hard to find, but one easy way to get a sense is to ask: what would happen were this entire class of people to simply disappear? Say what you like about nurses, garbage collectors, or mechanics, it's obvious that were they to vanish in a puff of smoke, the results would be immediate and catastrophic. A world without teachers or dock-workers would soon be in trouble, and even one without science fiction writers or ska musicians would clearly be a lesser place. It's not entirely clear how humanity would suffer were all private equity CEOs, lobbyists, PR researchers, actuaries, telemarketers, bailiffs or legal consultants to similarly vanish. (Many suspect it might markedly improve.) Yet apart from a handful of

well-touted exceptions (doctors), the rule holds surprisingly well. Even more perverse, there seems to be a broad sense that this is the way things should be. This is one of the secret strengths of right-wing populism. You can see it when tabloids whip up resentment against tube workers for paralysing London during contract disputes: the very fact that tube workers can paralyse London shows that their work is actually necessary, but this seems to be precisely what annoys people. It's even clearer in the US, where Republicans have had remarkable success mobilizing resentment against school teachers, or auto workers (and not, significantly, against the school administrators or auto industry managers who actually cause the problems) for their supposedly bloated wages and benefits. It's as if they are being told 'but you get to teach children! Or make cars! You get to have real jobs! And on top of that you have the nerve to also expect middle-class pensions and health care?'

If someone had designed a work regime perfectly suited to maintaining the power of finance capital, it's hard to see how they could have done a better job. Real, productive workers are relentlessly squeezed and exploited. The remainder are divided between a terrorised stratum of the, universally reviled, unemployed and a larger stratum who are basically paid to do nothing, in positions designed to make them identify with the perspectives and sensibilities of the ruling class (managers, administrators, etc.)—and particularly its financial avatars—but, at the same time, foster a simmering resentment against anyone whose work has clear and undeniable social value. Clearly, the system was never consciously designed. It emerged from almost a century of trial and error. But it is the only explanation for why, despite our technological capacities, we are not all working 3–4 hour days.

By David Graeber

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On Freedom of Information – Aaron Swartz

From the “Guerilla Open Access Manifesto” by Aaron Swartz

Information is power. But like all power, there are those who want to keep it for themselves. The world's entire scientific and cultural heritage, published over centuries in books and journals, is increasingly being digitized and locked up by a handful of private corporations. Want to read the papers featuring the most famous results of the sciences? You'll need to send enormous amounts to publishers like Reed Elsevier.

There are those struggling to change this. The Open Access Movement has fought valiantly to ensure that scientists do not sign their copyrights away but instead ensure their work is published on the Internet, under terms that allow anyone to access it. But even under the best scenarios, their work will only apply to things published in the future. Everything up until now will have been lost.

That is too high a price to pay. Forcing academics to pay money to read the work of their colleagues? Scanning entire libraries but only allowing the folks at Google to read them? Providing scientific articles to those at elite universities in the First World, but not to children in the Global South? It's outrageous and unacceptable.

"I agree," many say, "but what can we do? The companies hold the copyrights, they make enormous amounts of money by charging for access, and it's perfectly legal — there's nothing we can do to stop them." But there is something we can, something that's already being done: we can fight back.

Those with access to these resources — students, librarians, scientists — you have been given a privilege. You get to feed at this banquet of knowledge while the rest of the world is locked out. But you need not — indeed, morally, you cannot — keep this privilege for yourselves. You have a duty to share it with the world. And you have: trading passwords with colleagues, filling download requests for friends.

Meanwhile, those who have been locked out are not standing idly by. You have been sneaking through holes and climbing over fences, liberating the information locked up by the publishers and sharing them with your friends.

But all of this action goes on in the dark, hidden underground. It's called stealing or piracy, as if sharing a wealth of knowledge were the moral equivalent of plundering a ship and murdering its crew. But sharing isn't immoral — it's a moral imperative. Only those blinded by greed would refuse to let a friend make a copy.

Large corporations, of course, are blinded by greed. The laws under which they operate

require it — their shareholders would revolt at anything less. And the politicians they have bought off back them, passing laws giving them the exclusive power to decide who can make copies.

There is no justice in following unjust laws. It's time to come into the light and, in the grand tradition of civil disobedience, declare our opposition to this private theft of public culture.

We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world. We need to take stuff that's out of copyright and add it to the archive. We need to buy secret databases and put them on the Web. We need to download scientific journals and upload them to file sharing networks. We need to fight for Guerilla Open Access.

With enough of us, around the world, we'll not just send a strong message opposing the privatization of knowledge — we'll make it a thing of the past.

Will you join us?

Aaron Swartz July 2008,

Eremo, Italy

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Aaron Swartz, “Guerilla Open Access Manifesto,” Open Letter, 2008,
https://openlibrary.org/works/OL16799525W/Guerilla_Open_Access_Manifesto.

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On Opportunity and Race — James Baldwin

From Baldwin's opening remarks at the debate with William Buckley entitled “Has the American Dream been Achieved at the Expense of the American Negro?” at Cambridge in 1965.

Good evening,

I find myself, not for the first time, in the position of a kind of Jeremiah. For example, I don't disagree with Mr. Burford that the inequality suffered by the American Negro population of the United States has hindered the American dream. Indeed, it has. I quarrell with some other things he has to say. The other, deeper, element of a certain awkwardness I feel has to do with one's point of view. I have to put it that way – one's sense, one's system of reality. It would seem to me the proposition before the House, and I would put it that way, is the American Dream at the expense of the American Negro, or the American Dream *is* at the expense of the American Negro. Is the question hideously loaded, and then one's response to that question – one's reaction to that question – has to depend on effect and, in effect, where you find yourself in the world, what your sense of reality is, what your system of reality is. That is, it depends on assumptions which we hold so deeply so as to be scarcely aware of them.

Are white South African or Mississippi sharecropper, or Mississippi sheriff, or a Frenchman driven out of Algeria, all have, at bottom, a system of reality which compels them to, for example, in the case of the French exile from Algeria, to offend French reasons from having ruled Algeria. The Mississippi or Alabama sheriff, who really does believe, when he's facing a Negro boy or girl, that this woman, this man, this child must be insane to attack the system to which he owes his entire identity. Of course, to such a person, the proposition which we are trying to discuss here tonight does not exist. And on the other hand, I, have to speak as one of the people who've been most attacked by what we now must here call the Western or European system of reality. What white people in the world, what we call white supremacy – I hate to say it here – comes from Europe. It's how it got to America. Beneath then, whatever one's reaction to this proposition is, has to be the question of whether or not civilizations can be considered, as such, equal, or whether one's civilization has the right to overtake and subjugate, and, in fact, to destroy another. Now, what happens when that happens. Leaving aside all the physical facts that one can quote. Leaving aside, rape or murder. Leaving aside the bloody catalog of oppression, which we are in one way too familiar with already, what this does to the subjugated, the most private, the most serious thing this does to the subjugated, is to destroy his sense of reality. It destroys, for example, his father's authority over him. His father can no longer tell him anything, because the past has disappeared, and his father has no power in the world. This means, in the case of an American Negro, born in that glittering republic, and the moment you are born, since you don't know any better, every stick and stone and every face is white.

And since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose that you are, too. It comes as a

great shock around the age of 5, or 6, or 7, to discover that the flag to which you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes as a great shock to discover that Gary Cooper killing off the Indians, when you were rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians were you. It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and your identity, has not, in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you. The disaffection, the demoralization, and the gap between one person and another only on the basis of the color of their skin, begins there and accelerates – accelerates throughout a whole lifetime – to the present when you realize you're thirty and are having a terrible time managing to trust your countrymen. By the time you are thirty, you have been through a certain kind of mill. And the most serious effect of the mill you've been through is, again, not the catalog of disaster, the policemen, the taxi drivers, the waiters, the landlady, the landlord, the banks, the insurance companies, the millions of details, twenty four hours of every day, which spell out to you that you are a worthless human being. It is not that. It's by that time that you've begun to see it happening, in your daughter or your son, or your niece or your nephew.

You are thirty by now and nothing you have done has helped to escape the trap. But what is worse than that, is that nothing you have done, and as far as you can tell, nothing you can do, will save your son or your daughter from meeting the same disaster and not impossibly coming to the same end. Now, we're speaking about expense. I suppose there are several ways to address oneself, to some attempt to find what that word means here. Let me put it this way, that from a very literal point of view, the harbors and the ports, and the railroads of the country – the economy, especially of the Southern states – could not conceivably be what it has become, if they had not had, and do not still have, indeed for so long, for many generations, cheap labor. I am stating very seriously, and this is not an overstatement: *I* picked the cotton, *I* carried it to the market, and *I* built the railroads under someone else's whip for nothing. For nothing.

The Southern oligarchy, which has still today so very much power in Washington, and therefore some power in the world, was created by my labor and my sweat, and the violation of my women and the murder of my children. This, in the land of the free, and the home of the brave. And no one can challenge that statement. It is a matter of historical record.

In another way, this dream, and we'll get to the dream in a moment, is at the expense of the American Negro. You watched this in the Deep South in great relief. But not only in the Deep South. In the Deep South, you are dealing with a sheriff or a landlord, or a landlady or a girl of the Western Union desk, and she doesn't know quite who she's

dealing with, by which I mean, that if you're not a part of the town, and if you are a Nothern Nigger, it shows in millions of ways. So she simply knows that it's an unknown quantity, and she wants to have nothing to do with it because she won't talk to you, you have to wait for a while to get your telegram. OK, we all know this. We've all been through it and, by the time you get to be a man, it's very easy to deal with. But what is happening in the poor woman, the poor man's mind is this: they've been raised to believe, and by now they helplessly believe, that no matter how terrible their lives may be, and their lives have been quite terrible, and no matter how far they fall, no matter what disaster overtakes them, they have one enormous knowledge in consolation, which is like a heavenly revelation: at least, they are not Black.

Now, I suggest that of all the terrible things that can happen to a human being, that is one of the worst. I suggest that what has happened to white Southerners is in some ways, after all, much worse than what has happened to Negroes there because Sheriff Clark in Selma, Alabama, cannot be considered – you know, no one can be dismissed as a total monster. I'm sure he loves his wife, his children. I'm sure, you know, he likes to get drunk. You know, after all, one's got to assume he is visibly a man like me. But he doesn't know what drives him to use the club, to menace with the gun and to use the cattle prod. Something awful must have happened to a human being to be able to put a cattle prod against a woman's breasts, for example. What happens to the woman is ghastly. What happens to the man who does it is in some ways much, much worse. This is being done, after all, not a hundred years ago, but in 1965, in a country which is blessed with what we call prosperity, a word we won't examine too closely; with a certain kind of social coherence, which calls itself a civilized nation, and which espouses the notion of the freedom of the world. And it is perfectly true from the point of view now simply of an American Negro. Any American Negro watching this, no matter where he is, from the vantage point of Harlem, which is another terrible place, has to say to himself, in spite of what the government says – the government says we can't do anything about it – but if those were white people being murdered in Mississippi work farms, being carried off to jail, if those were white children running up and down the streets, the government would find some way of doing something about it. We have a civil rights bill now where an amendment, the fifteenth amendment, nearly a hundred years ago – I hate to sound again like an Old Testament prophet – but if the amendment was not honored then, I would have any reason to believe in the civil rights bill will be honored now. And after all one's been there, since before, you know, a lot of other people got there. If one has got to prove one's title to the land, isn't four hundred years enough? Four hundred years? At least three wars? The American soil is full of the corpses of my ancestors. Why is my freedom or my citizenship, or my right to live there, how is it conceivably a question now? And I suggest further, and in the same way, the moral life of Alabama sheriffs and poor Alabama ladies

– white ladies – their moral lives have been destroyed by the plague called color, that the American sense of reality has been corrupted by it.

At the risk of sounding excessive, what I always felt, when I finally left the country, and found myself abroad, in other places, and watched the Americans abroad – and these are my countrymen – and I do care about them, and even if I didn't, there is something between us. We have the same shorthand, I know, if I look at a boy or a girl from Tennessee, where they came from in Tennessee and what that means. No Englishman knows that. No Frenchman, no one in the world knows that, except another Black man who comes from the same place. One watches these lonely people denying the only kin they have. We talk about integration in America as though it was some great new conundrum. The problem in America is that we've been integrated for a very long time. Put me next to any African and you will see what I mean. My grandmother was not a rapist. What we are not facing is the result of what we've done. What one brings the American people to do for all our sakes is simply to accept our history. I was there not only as a slave, but also as a concubine. One knows the power, after all, which can be used against another person if you've got absolute power over that person.

It seemed to me when I watched Americans in Europe what they didn't know about Europeans was what they didn't know about me. They weren't trying, for example, to be nasty to the French girl, or rude to the French waiter. They didn't know they hurt their feelings. They didn't have any sense this particular woman, this particular man, though they spoke another language and had different manners and ways, was a human being. And they walked over them, the same kind of bland ignorance, condescension, charming and cheerful with which they've always pat me on the head and called me Shine and were upset when I was upset. What is relevant about this is that whereas forty years ago when I was born, the question of having to deal with what is unspoken by the subjugated, what is never said to the master, of ever having to deal with this reality was a very remote possibility. It was in no one's mind. When I was growing up, I was taught in American history books, that Africa had no history, and neither did I. That I was a savage about whom the less said, the better, who had been saved by Europe and brought to America. And, of course, I believed it. I didn't have much choice. Those were the only books there were. Everyone else seemed to agree.

If you walk out of Harlem, ride out of Harlem, downtown, the world agrees what you see is much bigger, cleaner, whiter, richer, safer than where you are. They collect the garbage. People obviously can pay their life insurance. Their children look happy, safe. You're not. And you go back home, and it would seem that, of course, that it's an act of God that this is true! That you belong where white people have put you.

It is only since the Second World War that there's been a counter-image in the world. And that image did not come about through any legislation or part of any American government, but through the fact that Africa was suddenly on the stage of the world, and Africans had to be dealt with in a way they'd never been dealt with before. This gave an American Negro for the first time a sense of himself beyond the savage or a clown. It has created and will create a great many conundrums. One of the great things that the white world does not know, but I think I do know, is that Black people are just like everybody else. One has used the myth of Negro and the myth of color to pretend and to assume that you were dealing with, essentially, with something exotic, bizarre, and practically, according to human laws, unknown. Alas, it is not true. We're also mercenaries, dictators, murderers, liars. We are human too.

What is crucial here is that unless we can manage to accept, establish some kind of dialog between those people whom I pretend have paid for the American dream and those other people who have not achieved it, we will be in terrible trouble. I want to say, at the end, the last, is that is that is what concerns me most. We are sitting in this room, and we are all, at least I'd like to think we are, relatively civilized, and we can talk to each other at least on certain levels so that we could walk out of here assuming that the measure of our enlightenment, or at least, our politeness, has some effect on the world. It may not.

I remember, for example, when the ex Attorney General, Mr. Robert Kennedy, said that it was conceivable that in forty years, in America, we might have a Negro president. That sounded like a very emancipated statement, I suppose, to white people. They were not in Harlem when this statement was first heard. And they're not here, and possibly will never hear the laughter and the bitterness, and the scorn with which this statement was greeted. From the point of view of the man in the Harlem barber shop, Bobby Kennedy only got here yesterday, and he's already on his way to the presidency. We've been here for four hundred years and now he tells us that maybe in forty years, if you're good, we may let you become president.

What is dangerous here is the turning away from – the turning away from – anything any white American says. The reason for the political hesitation, in spite of the Johnson landslide is that one has been betrayed by American politicians for so long. And I am a grown man and perhaps I can be reasoned with. I certainly hope I can be. But I don't know, and neither does Martin Luther King, none of us know how to deal with those other people whom the white world has so long ignored, who don't believe anything the white world says and don't entirely believe anything I or Martin is saying. And one can't blame them. You watch what has happened to them in less than twenty years.

It seems to me that the City of New York, for example – this is my last point – It's had

Negroes in it for a very long time. If the city of New York were able, as it has indeed been able, in the last fifteen years to reconstruct itself, tear down buildings and raise great new ones, downtown and for money, and has done nothing whatever except build housing projects in the ghetto for the Negroes. And of course, Negroes hate it. Presently the property does indeed deteriorate because the children cannot bear it. They want to get out of the ghetto. If the American pretensions were based on more solid, a more honest assessment of life and of themselves, it would not mean for Negroes when someone says “Urban Renewal” that Negroes can simply are going to be thrown out into the streets. This is just what it does mean now. This is not an act of God. We’re dealing with a society made and ruled by men. Had the American Negro had not been present in America, I am convinced the history of the American labor movement would be much more edifying than it is. It is a terrible thing for an entire people to surrender to the notion that one-ninth of its population is beneath them. And until that moment, until the moment comes when we, the Americans, we, the American people, are able to accept the fact, that I have to accept, for example, that my ancestors are both white and Black. That on that continent we are trying to forge a new identity for which we need each other and that I am not a ward of America. I am not an object of missionary charity. I am one of the people who built the country—until this moment there is scarcely any hope for the American dream, because the people who are denied participation in it, by their very presence, will wreck it. And if that happens it is a very grave moment for the West.

Thank you.

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On the Racial Contract – Charles Mills

“Overview” from *The Racial Contract* by Charles Mills

Introduction

In Political Philosophy and Ethics, there is a notion of contractualism, the idea that bands of people create implicit⁹⁰ and explicit⁹¹ contracts that govern behavior between parties. Part of contractualism claims that these contracts inform or set what is good in the society.⁹² Another aspect of contractualism asks “What is the nature of just contracts?”.

This reading does something in between. Charles Mills unearths what he calls The Racial Contract, a contract that created and maintained racial and colonial relations. He further claims that the contract is exploitative in nature and that even though most whites today are not *signatories* of the contract, they are *beneficiaries* of it whether they want to be or not.

Mills patterns his discussion after Carole Pateman’s *The Sexual Contract*, which outlines how patriarchy has created an implicit and explicit contract that subverts the interests of particular men over women (and other men). Mills claims that these two exploitative contracts enable, or underwrite, the Classical Liberal Social Contract. That is to say, without the exploitation of people of color and women (forced labor, looting of lands, et cetera), the Liberal Project would not have been able to get off the ground and have the amazing success it has had.

The selection below is comprised of snippets from the first chapter of *The Racial Contract*. Bolding and emphasis are added by the editor to highlight historical legal arrangements or other areas of importance.

Text

I will start with an overview of the Racial Contract, highlighting its differences from, as well as its similarities to, the classical and contemporary social contract. The Racial Contract is political, moral, and epistemological; the Racial Contract is real; and

⁹⁰ Think of cultural norms here — all of those informal arrangements that shape our lives.

⁹¹ Think of laws, company policies, all of the actual contracts that are made in a given society.

⁹² And is in this way somewhat akin to cultural relativism.

economically, in determining who gets what, the Racial Contract is an exploitation contract.

The Racial Contract is political, moral, and epistemological.

The “social contract” is actually several contracts in one. Contemporary contractarians usually distinguish, to begin with, between the political contract and the moral contract, before going on to make (subsidiary) distinctions within both. I contend, however, that the orthodox social contract also tacitly presupposes an “epistemological” contract, and that for the Racial Contract it is crucial to make this explicit.

The political contract is an account of the origins of government and our political obligations to it. The subsidiary distinction sometimes made in the political contract is between the contract to establish society (thereby taking “natural,” presocial individuals out of the state of nature and reconstructing and constituting them as members of a collective body) and the contract to establish the state (thereby transferring outright or delegating in a relationship of trust the rights and powers we have in the state of nature to a sovereign governing entity).¹ The moral contract, on the other hand, is the foundation of the moral code established for the society, by which the citizens are supposed to regulate their behavior. The subsidiary distinction here is between two interpretations (to be discussed) of the relationship between the moral contract and state-of-nature morality. In modern versions of the contract, most notably Rawls’s of course, the political contract largely vanishes, modern anthropology having long superseded the naive social origin histories of the classic contractarians. The focus is then almost exclusively on the moral contract. This is not conceived of as an actual historical event that took place on leaving the state of nature. Rather, the state of nature survives only in the attenuated form of what Rawls calls the “original position,” and the “contract” is a purely hypothetical exercise (a thought experiment) in establishing what a just “basic structure” would be, with a schedule of rights, duties, and liberties that shapes citizens’ moral psychology, conceptions of the right, notions of self-respect, etc.²

Now the Racial Contract—and the “Racial Contract” as a theory, that is, the distanced, critical examination of the Racial Contract—follows the classical model in being both sociopolitical and moral. It explains how society was created or crucially transformed, how the individuals in that society were reconstituted, how the state was established, and how a particular moral code and a certain moral psychology were brought into existence. (As I have emphasized, the “Racial Contract” seeks to account for the way things are and how they came to be that way—the descriptive—as well as the way they should be—the normative—since indeed one of its complaints about white political philosophy is

precisely its otherworldiness, its ignoring of basic political realities.) But the Racial Contract, as we will see, is also epistemological, prescribing norms for cognition to which its signatories must adhere. A preliminary characterization would run something like this:

The Racial Contract is that set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements (higher-level contracts about contracts, which set the limits of the contracts' validity) between the members of one subset of humans, henceforth designated by (shifting) "racial" (phenotypical/genealogical/cultural) criteria $C_1, C_2, C_3 \dots$ as "white," and coextensive (making due allowance for gender differentiation) with the class of full persons, to categorize the remaining subset of humans as "nonwhite" and of a different and inferior moral status, subpersons, so that they have a subordinate civil standing in the white or white-ruled polities the whites either already inhabit or establish or in transactions as aliens with these polities, and the moral and juridical rules normally regulating the behavior of whites in their dealings with one another either do not apply at all in dealings with nonwhites or apply only in a qualified form (depending in part on changing historical circumstances and what particular variety of nonwhite is involved), but in any case the general purpose of the Contract is always the differential privileging of the whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them. All whites are beneficiaries of the Contract, though some whites are not signatories to it.³

It will be obvious, therefore, that the Racial Contract is not a contract to which the nonwhite subset of humans can be a genuinely consenting party (though, depending again on the circumstances, it may sometimes be politic to pretend that this is the case). Rather, it is a contract between those categorized as white over the nonwhites, who are thus the objects rather than the subjects of the agreement.

The logic of the classic social contract, political, moral, and epistemological, then undergoes a corresponding refraction, with shifts, accordingly, in the key terms and principles.

Politically, the contract to establish society and the government, thereby transforming abstract raceless "men" from denizens of the state of nature into social creatures who are politically obligated to a neutral state, becomes the founding of a racial polity, whether white settler states (where preexisting populations already are or can be made sparse) or what are sometimes called "sojourner colonies," the establishment of a white presence and colonial rule over existing societies (which are somewhat more populous, or whose inhabitants are more resistant to being made sparse). In addition, the colonizing mother country is also changed by its relation to these new polities, so that its own citizens are altered.

In the social contract, the crucial human metamorphosis is from “natural” man to “civil/political” man, from the resident of the state of nature to the citizen of the created society. This change can be more or less extreme, depending on the theorist involved. For Rousseau it is a dramatic transformation, by which animallike creatures of appetite and instinct become citizens bound by justice and self-prescribed laws. For Hobbes it is a somewhat more laid-back affair by which people who look out primarily for themselves learn to constrain their selfinterest for their own good.⁴ But in all cases the original “state of nature” supposedly indicates the condition of all men, and the social metamorphosis affects them all in the same way.

In the Racial Contract, by contrast, the crucial metamorphosis is the preliminary conceptual partitioning and corresponding transformation of human populations into “white” and “nonwhite” men. The role played by the “state of nature” then becomes radically different. In the white settler state, its role is not primarily to demarcate the (temporarily) prepolitical state of “all” men (who are really white men), but rather the permanently prepolitical state or, perhaps better, nonpolitical state (insofar as “pre-” suggests eventual internal movement toward) of nonwhite men. The establishment of society thus implies the denial that a society already existed; the creation of society requires the intervention of white men, who are thereby positioned as already sociopolitical beings. White men who are (definitionally) already part of society encounter nonwhites who are not, who are “savage” residents of a state of nature characterized in terms of wilderness, jungle, wasteland. These the white men bring partially into society as subordinate citizens or exclude on reservations or deny the existence of or exterminate. In the colonial case, admittedly preexisting but (for one reason or another) deficient societies (decadent, stagnant, corrupt) are taken over and run for the “benefit” of the nonwhite natives, who are deemed childlike, incapable of self-rule and handling their own affairs, and thus appropriately wards of the state. Here the natives are usually characterized as “barbarians” rather than “savages,” their state of nature being somewhat farther away (though not, of course, as remote and lost in the past—if it ever existed in the first place—as the Europeans’ state of nature). But in times of crisis the conceptual distance between the two, barbarian and savage, tends to shrink or collapse, for this technical distinction within the nonwhite population is vastly less important than the central distinction between whites and nonwhites.

In both cases, then, though in different ways, the Racial Contract establishes a racial polity, a racial state, and a racial juridical system, where the status of whites and nonwhites is clearly demarcated, whether by law or custom. And the purpose of this state, by contrast with the neutral state of classic contractarianism, is, *inter alia*, specifically to maintain and reproduce this racial order, securing the privileges and advantages of the

full white citizens and maintaining the subordination of nonwhites. Correspondingly, the “consent” expected of the white citizens is in part conceptualized as a consent, whether explicit or tacit, to the racial order, to white supremacy, what could be called Whiteness. To the extent that those phenotypically/genealogically/culturally categorized as white fail to live up to the civic and political responsibilities of Whiteness, they are in dereliction of their duties as citizens. From the inception, then, race is in no way an “afterthought,” a “deviation” from ostensibly raceless Western ideals, but rather a central shaping constituent of those ideals.

In the social contract tradition, there are two main possible relations between the moral contract and the political contract.

1. On the first view, the moral contract represents preexisting objectivist morality (theological or secular) and thus constrains the terms of the political contract. This is the view found in Locke and Kant. In other words, there is an objective moral code in the state of nature itself, even if there are no policemen and judges to enforce it. So any society, government, and legal system that are established should be based on that moral code.
2. On the second view, the political contract creates morality as a conventionalist set of rules. So there is no independent objective moral criterion for judging one moral code to be superior to another or for indicting a society’s established morality as unjust. On this conception, which is famously attributed to Hobbes, morality is just a set of rules for expediting the rational pursuit and coordination of our own interests without conflict with those other people who are doing the same thing.⁵

The Racial Contract can accommodate both versions, but as it is the former version (the contract as described in Locke and Kant) rather than the latter version (the contract as described in Hobbes) which represents the mainstream of the contract tradition, I focus on that one.⁶ Here, the good polity is taken to rest on a preexisting moral foundation. Obviously, this is a far more attractive conception of a political system than Hobbes’s view. The ideal of an objectively just polis to which we should aspire in our political activism goes back in the Western tradition all the way to Plato. In the medieval Christian worldview which continued to influence contractarianism well into the modern period, there is a “natural law” immanent in the structure of the universe which is supposed to direct us morally in striving for this ideal.⁷ (For the later, secular versions of contractarianism, the idea would simply be that people have rights and duties even in the state of nature because of their nature as human beings.) So it is wrong to steal, rape, kill in the state of nature even if there are no human laws written down saying it is wrong.

These moral principles must constrain the human laws that are made and the civil rights that are assigned once the polity is established. In part, then, the political contract simply codifies a morality that already exists, writing it down and filling in the details, so we don't have to rely on a divinely implanted moral sense, or conscience, whose perceptions may on occasion be distorted by self-interest. What is right and wrong, just and unjust, in society will largely be determined by what is right and wrong, just and unjust, in the state of nature.

The character of this objective moral foundation is therefore obviously crucial. For the mainstream of the contractarian tradition, it is the freedom and equality of all men in the state of nature. As Locke writes in the *Second Treatise*, "To understand Political Power right, and derive it from its Original, we must consider what State all Men are naturally in, and that is, a State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions.... A State also of Equality, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another."⁸ For Kant, similarly, it is our equal moral personhood.⁹ Contractarianism is (supposedly) committed to moral egalitarianism, the moral equality of all men, the notion that the interests of all men matter equally and all men must have equal rights. Thus, contractarianism is also committed to a principled and foundational opposition to the traditionalist hierarchical ideology of the old feudal order, the ideology of inherent ascribed status and natural subordination. It is this language of equality which echoes in the American and French Revolutions, the Declaration of Independence, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. And it is this moral egalitarianism that must be retained in the allocation of rights and liberties in civil society. When in a modern Western society people insist on their rights and freedoms and express their outrage at not being treated equally, it is to these classic ideas that, whether they know it or not, they are appealing.

But as we will see in greater detail later on, the color-coded morality of the Racial Contract restricts the possession of this natural freedom and equality to white men. By virtue of their complete nonrecognition, or at best inadequate, myopic recognition, of the duties of natural law, nonwhites are appropriately relegated to a lower rung on the moral ladder (the Great Chain of Being).¹⁰ They are designated as born unfree and unequal. A partitioned social ontology is therefore created, a universe divided between persons and racial subpersons, *Untermenschen*, who may variously be black, red, brown, yellow—slaves, aborigines, colonial populations—but who are collectively appropriately known as "subject races." And these subpersons—niggers, injuns, chinks, wogs, greasers, blackfellows, kaffirs, coolies, abos, dinks, googoos, gooks—are biologically destined never to penetrate the normative rights ceiling established for them below white persons. Henceforth, then, whether openly admitted or not, it is taken for granted that the grand ethical theories propounded in the development of Western moral and political thought

are of restricted scope, explicitly or implicitly intended by their proponents to be restricted to persons, whites. The terms of the Racial Contract set the parameters for white morality as a whole, so that competing Lockean and Kantian contractarian theories of natural rights and duties, or later anticontractarian theories such as nineteenth-century utilitarianism, are all limited by its stipulations.

Finally, the Racial Contract requires its own peculiar moral and empirical epistemology, its norms and procedures for determining what counts as moral and factual knowledge of the world. In the standard accounts of contractarianism it is not usual to speak of there being an “epistemological” contract, but there is an epistemology associated with contractarianism, in the form of natural law. This provides us with a moral compass, whether in the traditional version of Locke—the light of reason implanted in us by God so we can discern objective right and wrong—or in the revisionist version of Hobbes—the ability to assess the objectively optimal prudential course of action and what it requires of us for self-interested cooperation with others. So through our natural faculties we come to know reality in both its factual and valuational aspects, the way things objectively are and what is objectively good or bad about them. I suggest we can think of this as an idealized consensus about cognitive norms and, in this respect, an agreement or “contract” of sorts. There is an understanding about what counts as a correct, objective interpretation of the world, and for agreeing to this view, one is (“contractually”) granted full cognitive standing in the polity, the official epistemic community.¹¹

But for the Racial Contract things are necessarily more complicated. The requirements of “objective” cognition, factual and moral, in a racial polity are in a sense more demanding in that officially sanctioned reality is divergent from actual reality. So here, it could be said, one has an agreement to misinterpret the world. One has to learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority, whether religious or secular.

Thus in effect, on matters related to race, the Racial Contract prescribes for its signatories an inverted epistemology, an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made. Part of what it means to be constructed as “white” (the metamorphosis of the sociopolitical contract), part of what it requires to achieve Whiteness, successfully to become a white person (one imagines a ceremony with certificates attending the successful rite of passage: “Congratulations, you’re now an official white person!”), is a cognitive model that precludes self-transparency and genuine understanding of social realities. To a significant extent, then, white signatories will live

in an invented delusional world, a racial fantasyland, a “consensual hallucination,” to quote William Gibson’s famous characterization of cyberspace, though this particular hallucination is located in real space.¹² There will be white mythologies, invented Orients, invented Africas, invented Americas, with a correspondingly fabricated population, countries that never were, inhabited by people who never were—Calibans and Tontos, Man Fridays and Sambos—but who attain a virtual reality through their existence in travelers’ tales, folk myth, popular and highbrow fiction, colonial reports, scholarly theory, Hollywood cinema, living in the white imagination and determinedly imposed on their alarmed real-life counterparts.¹³ One could say then, as a general rule, that white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race are among the most pervasive mental phenomena of the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement. And these phenomena are in no way accidental, but prescribed by the terms of the Racial Contract, which requires a certain schedule of structured blindnesses and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity.

The Racial Contract is a historical actuality.

The social contract in its modern version has long since given up any pretensions to be able to explain the historical origins of society and the state. Whereas the classic contractarians were engaged in a project both descriptive and prescriptive, the modern Rawls-inspired contract is purely a prescriptive thought experiment. And even Pateman’s Sexual Contract, though its focus is the real rather than the ideal, is not meant as a literal account of what men in 4004 B.C. decided to do on the plains of Mesopotamia. Whatever accounts for what Frederick Engels once called “the world historical defeat of the female sex”¹⁴—whether the development of an economic surplus, as he theorized, or the male discovery of the capacity to rape and the female disadvantage of being the childbearing half of the species, as radical feminists have argued—it is clearly lost in antiquity.

By contrast, ironically, the Racial Contract, never so far as I know explored as such, has the best claim to being an actual historical fact. Far from being lost in the mists of the ages, it is clearly historically locatable in the series of events marking the creation of the modern world by European colonialism and the voyages of “discovery” now increasingly and more appropriately called expeditions of conquest. The Columbian quincentenary a few years ago, with its accompanying debates, polemics, controversies, counterdemonstrations, and outpourings of revisionist literature, confronted many whites with the uncomfortable fact, hardly discussed in mainstream moral and political theory, that we live in a world which has been foundationally shaped for the past five hundred years by the realities of European domination and the gradual consolidation of

global white supremacy. Thus not only is the Racial Contract “real,” but—whereas the social contract is characteristically taken to be establishing the legitimacy of the nation-state, and codifying morality and law within its boundaries—the Racial Contract is global, involving a tectonic shift of the ethicojuridical basis of the planet as a whole, the division of the world, as Jean-Paul Sartre put it long ago, between “men” and “natives.”¹⁵

Europeans thereby emerge as “the lords of human kind,” the “lords of all the world,” with the increasing power to determine the standing of the non-Europeans who are their subjects.¹⁶ Although no single act literally corresponds to the drawing up and signing of a contract, there is a series of acts—papal bulls and other theological pronouncements; European discussions about colonialism, “discovery,” and international law; pacts, treaties, and legal decisions; academic and popular debates about the humanity of nonwhites; the establishment of formalized legal structures of differential treatment; and the routinization of informal illegal or quasi-legal practices effectively sanctioned by the complicity of silence and government failure to intervene and punish perpetrators—which collectively can be seen, not just metaphorically but close to literally, as its conceptual, juridical, and normative equivalent.

Anthony Pagden suggests that a division of the European empires into their main temporal periods should recognize “two distinct, but interdependent histories”: the colonization of the Americas, 1492 to the 1830s, and the occupation of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, 1730s to the period after World War II.¹⁷ In the first period, it was, to begin with, the nature and moral status of the Native Americans that primarily had to be determined, and then that of the imported African slaves whose labor was required to build this “New World.” In the second period, culminating in formal European colonial rule over most of the world by the early twentieth century, it was the character of colonial peoples that became crucial. But in all cases “race” is the common conceptual denominator that gradually came to signify the respective global statuses of superiority and inferiority, privilege and subordination. There is an opposition of us against them with multiple overlapping dimensions: Europeans versus non-Europeans (geography), civilized versus wild/savage/barbarians (culture), Christians versus heathens (religion). But they all eventually coalesced into the basic opposition of white versus nonwhite.

A Lumbee Indian legal scholar, Robert Williams, has traced the evolution of the Western legal position on the rights of native peoples from its medieval antecedents to the beginnings of the modern period, showing how it is consistently based on the assumption of “the rightness and necessity of subjugating and assimilating other peoples to [the European] worldview.”¹⁸ Initially the intellectual framework was a theological one, with normative inclusion and exclusion manifesting itself as the demarcation between

Christians and heathens. The pope's powers over the **Societas Christiana**, the universal Christian commonwealth, were seen as "extending not only over all Christians within the universal commonwealth, but over unregenerated heathens and infidels as well," and this policy would subsequently underwrite not merely the Crusades against Islam but the later voyages to the Americas. Sometimes papal pronouncements did grant rights and rationality to nonbelievers. As a result of dealing with the Mongols in the thirteenth century, for example, Pope Innocent IV" conceded that infidels and heathens possessed the natural law right to elect their own secular leaders," and Pope Paul III's famous **Sublimis Deus** (1537) stated that Native Americans were rational beings, not to be treated as "dumb brutes created for our service" but "as truly men . . . capable of understanding the Catholic faith."¹⁹ But as Williams points out, the latter qualification was always crucial. A Eurocentrically normed conception of rationality made it coextensive with acceptance of the Christian message, so that rejection was proof of bestial irrationality.

Even more remarkably, in the case of Native Americans this acceptance was to be signaled by their agreement to the **Requerimiento**, a long statement read aloud to them in, of course, a language they did not understand, failing which assent a just war could lawfully be waged against them.²⁰ One author writes:

The requerimiento is the prototypical example of text justifying conquest. Informing the Indians that their lands were entrusted by Christ to the pope and thence to the kings of Spain, the document offers freedom from slavery for those Indians who accept Spanish rule. Even though it was entirely incomprehensible to a non-Spanish speaker, reading the document provided sufficient justification for dispossession of land and immediate enslavement of the indigenous people. [Bartolomé de] Las Casas's famous comment on the requerimiento was that one does not know "whether to laugh or cry at the absurdity of it." . . . While appearing to respect "rights" the requerimiento, in fact, takes them away.²¹

In effect, then, the Catholic Church's declarations either formally legitimated conquest or could be easily circumvented where a weak *prima facie* moral barrier was erected.

The growth of the Enlightenment and the rise of secularism did not challenge this strategic dichotomization (Christian/infidel) so much as translate it into other forms. Philip Curtin refers to the characteristic "exceptionalism in European thought about the non-West," "a conception of the world largely based on self-identification—and identification of 'the other people.'"²² Similarly, Pierre van den Berghe describes the "Enlightenment dichotomization" of the normative theories of the period.²³ "Race"

gradually became the formal marker of this differentiated status, replacing the religious divide (whose disadvantage, after all, was that it could always be overcome through conversion). Thus a category crystallized over time in European thought to represent entities who are humanoid but not fully human (“savages,” “barbarians”) and who are identified as such by being members of the general set of nonwhite races. Influenced by the ancient Roman distinction between the civilized within and the barbarians outside the empire, the distinction between full and question-mark humans, Europeans set up a two-tiered moral code with one set of rules for whites and another for nonwhites.²⁴

Correspondingly, various moral and legal doctrines were propounded which can be seen as specific manifestations and instantiations, appropriately adjusted to circumstances, of the overarching Racial Contract. These were specific subsidiary contracts designed for different modes of exploiting the resources and peoples of the rest of the world for Europe: the expropriation contract, the slavery contract, the colonial contract.

The “**Doctrine of Discovery**,” for example, what Williams identifies as the “paradigmatic tenet informing and determining contemporary European legal discourse respecting relations with Western tribal societies,” was central to the expropriation contract.²⁵ The American Justice Joseph Story glossed it as granting Europeans

an absolute dominion over the whole territories afterwards occupied by them, not in virtue of any conquest of, or cession by, the Indian natives, but as a right acquired by discovery.... The title of the Indians was not treated as a right of property and dominion, but as a mere right of occupancy. As infidels, heathens, and savages, they were not allowed to possess the prerogatives belonging to absolute, sovereign, and independent nations. The territory over which they wandered, and which they used for their temporary and fugitive purposes, was, in respect to Christians, deemed as if it were inhabited only by brute animals.²⁶

Similarly, the slavery contract gave Europeans the right to enslave Native Americans and Africans at a time when slavery was dead or dying out in Europe, based on doctrines of the inherent inferiority of these peoples. A classic statement of the slavery contract is the **1857 Dred Scott v. Sanford** U.S. Supreme Court decision of Chief Justice Roger Taney, which stated that blacks

had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and

lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit.... This opinion was at that time fixed and universal in the civilized portion of the white race. It was regarded as an axiom in morals as well as in politics, which no one thought of disputing, or supposed to be open to dispute.²⁷

Finally, there is the colonial contract, which legitimated European rule over the nations in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Consider, for instance, this wonderful example, almost literally “contractarian” in character, from the French imperial theorist Jules Harmand (1845–1921), who devised the notion of association:

Expansion by conquest, however necessary, seems especially unjust and disturbing to the conscience of democracies.... But to transpose democratic institutions into such a setting is aberrant nonsense. The subject people are not and cannot become citizens in the democratic sense of the term.... It is necessary, then, to accept as a principle and point of departure the fact that there is a hierarchy of races and civilizations, and that we belong to the superior race and civilization.... The basic legitimation of conquest over native peoples is the conviction of our superiority, not merely our mechanical, economic, and military superiority, but our moral superiority. Our dignity rests on that quality, and it underlies our right to direct the rest of humanity.

What is therefore necessary is a “**Contract’ of Association**”:

Without falling into Rousseauan reveries, it is worth noting that association implies a contract, and this idea, though nothing more than an illustration, is more appropriately applied to the coexistence of two profoundly different societies thrown sharply and artificially into contact than it is to the single society formed by natural processes which Rousseau envisaged. This is how the terms of this implicit agreement can be conceived. The European conqueror brings order, foresight, and security to a human society which, though ardently aspiring for these fundamental values without which no community can make progress, still lacks the aptitude to achieve them from within itself.... With these mental and material instruments, which it lacked and now receives, it gains the idea and ambition for a better existence, and the means of achieving it. We will obey you, say the subjects, if you begin by proving yourself worthy. We will obey you if you can succeed in convincing us of the superiority of that civilization of which you talk so much.²⁸

Indian laws, slave codes, and colonial native acts formally codified the subordinate status

of nonwhites and (ostensibly) regulated their treatment, creating a juridical space for nonEuropeans as a separate category of beings. So even if there was sometimes an attempt to prevent “abuses” (and these codes were honored far more often in the breach than the observance), the point is that “abuse” as a concept presupposes as a norm the legitimacy of the subordination. Slavery and colonialism are not conceived as wrong in their denial of autonomy to persons; what is wrong is the improper administration of these regimes.

It would be a fundamental error, then—a point to which I will return—to see racism as anomalous, a mysterious deviation from European Enlightenment humanism. Rather, it needs to be realized that, in keeping with the Roman precedent, European humanism usually meant that only Europeans were human. European moral and political theory, like European thought in general, developed within the framework of the Racial Contract and, as a rule, took it for granted. As Edward Said points out in *Culture and Imperialism*, we must not see culture as “antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations.” But this occupational blindness has in fact infected most “professional humanists” (and certainly most philosophers), so that “as a result [they are] unable to make the connection between the prolonged and sordid cruelty of practices such as slavery, colonialist and racial oppression, and imperial subjection on the one hand, and the poetry, fiction, philosophy of the society that engages in these practices on the other.”²⁹ By the nineteenth century, conventional white opinion casually assumed the uncontroversial validity of a hierarchy of “higher” and “lower,” “master” and “subject” races, for whom, it is obvious, different rules must apply.

The modern world was thus expressly created as a racially hierarchical polity, globally dominated by Europeans. A 1969 *Foreign Affairs* article worth rereading today reminds us that as late as the 1940s the world “was still by and large a Western white-dominated world. The long-established patterns of white power and nonwhite non-power were still the generally accepted order of things. All the accompanying assumptions and mythologies about race and color were still mostly taken for granted.... [W]hite supremacy was a generally assumed and accepted state of affairs in the United States as well as in Europe’s empires.”³⁰ But statements of such frankness are rare or nonexistent in mainstream white opinion today, which generally seeks to rewrite the past so as to deny or minimize the obvious fact of global white domination.

Yet the United States itself, of course, is a white settler state on territory expropriated from its aboriginal inhabitants through a combination of military force, disease, and a “century of dishonor” of broken treaties.³¹ The expropriation involved literal genocide (a word now unfortunately devalued by hyperbolic overuse) of a kind that some recent

revisionist historians have argued needs to be seen as comparable to the Third Reich's.³² Washington, Father of the Nation, was, understandably, known somewhat differently to the Senecas as "Town Destroyer."³³ In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson characterized Native Americans as "merciless Indian Savages," and in the Constitution, blacks, of course, appear only obliquely, through the famous "60 percent solution." Thus, as Richard Drinnon concludes: "The Framers manifestly established a government under which non-Europeans were not men created equal—in the white polity . . . they were nonpeoples."³⁴ Though on a smaller scale and not always so ruthlessly (or, in the case of New Zealand, because of more successful indigenous resistance), what are standardly classified as the other white settler states—for example, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Rhodesia, and South Africa—were all founded on similar policies: the extermination, displacement, and/or herding onto reservations of the aboriginal population.³⁵ Pierre van den Berghe has coined the illuminating phrase "Herrenvolk democracies" to describe these polities, which captures perfectly the dichotomization of the Racial Contract.³⁶ Their subsequent evolution has been somewhat different, but defenders of South Africa's system of apartheid often argued that U.S. criticism was hypocritical in light of its own history of **jim crow**, especially since de facto segregation remains sufficiently entrenched that even today, forty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, two American sociologists can title their study *American Apartheid*.³⁷ The racist record of preliberation Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa is well known; not so familiar may be the fact that the United States, Canada, and Australia all maintained "white" immigration policies until a few decades ago, and native peoples in all three countries suffer high poverty, infant mortality, and suicide rates.

Elsewhere, in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, large parts of the world were colonized, that is, formally brought under the rule of one or another of the European powers (or, later, the United States): the early Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas, the Philippines, and south Asia; the jealous competition from Britain, France, and Holland; the British conquest of India; the French expansion into Algeria and Indochina; the Dutch advance into Indonesia; the Opium Wars against China; the late nineteenth-century "**scramble for Africa**"; the U.S. war against Spain, seizure of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and annexation of Hawaii.³⁸ The pace of change this century has been so dramatic that it is easy to forget that less than a hundred years ago, in 1914, "Europe held a grand total of roughly 85 percent of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions, and commonwealths. No other associated set of colonies in history was as large, none so totally dominated, none so unequal in power to the Western metropolis."³⁹ One could say that the Racial Contract creates a transnational white polity, a virtual community of people linked by their citizenship in Europe at home and abroad (Europe proper, the colonial greater Europe, and the "fragments" of Euro-America, Euro-

Australia, etc.), and constituted in opposition to their indigenous subjects. In most of Africa and Asia, where colonial rule ended only after World War II, rigid “color bars” maintained the separation between Europeans and indigenes. As European, as white, one knew oneself to be a member of the superior race, one’s skin being one’s passport: “Whatever a white man did must in some grotesque fashion be ‘civilized.’”⁴⁰ So though there were local variations in the Racial Contract, depending on circumstances and the particular mode of exploitation—for example, a bipolar racial system in the (Anglo) United States, as against a subtler color hierarchy in (Iberian) Latin America—it remains the case that the white tribe, as the global representative of civilization and modernity, is generally on top of the social pyramid.⁴¹

We live, then, in a world built on the Racial Contract. That we do is simultaneously quite obvious if you think about it (the dates and details of colonial conquest, the constitutions of these states and their exclusionary juridical mechanisms, the histories of official racist ideologies, the battles against slavery and colonialism, the formal and informal structures of discrimination, are all within recent historical memory and, of course, massively documented in other disciplines) and nonobvious, since most whites don’t think about it or don’t think about it as the outcome of a history of political oppression but rather as just “the way things are.” (“You say we’re all over the world because we conquered the world? Why would you put it that way?”) In the **Treaty of Tordesillas** (1494) which divided the world between Spain and Portugal, the **Valladolid (Spain) Conference** (1550–1551) to decide whether Native Americans were really human, the later debates over African slavery and abolitionism, the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) to partition Africa, the various inter-European pacts, treaties, and informal arrangements on policing their colonies, the post-World War I discussions in Versailles after a war to make the world safe for democracy—we see (or should see) with complete clarity a world being governed by white people. So though there is also internal conflict—disagreements, battles, even world wars—the dominant movers and shapers will be Europeans at home and abroad, with non-Europeans lining up to fight under their respective banners, and the system of white domination itself rarely being challenged. (The exception, of course, is Japan, which escaped colonization, and so for most of the twentieth century has had a shifting and ambivalent relationship with the global white polity.) The legacy of this world is, of course, still with us today, in the economic, political, and cultural domination of the planet by Europeans and their descendants. The fact that this racial structure, clearly political in character, and the struggle against it, equally so, have not for the most part been deemed appropriate subject matter for mainstream Anglo-American political philosophy and the fact that the very concepts hegemonic in the discipline are refractory to an understanding of these realities, reveal at best, a disturbing provincialism and an ahistoricity profoundly at odds with the radically foundational questioning on which

philosophy prides itself and, at worst, a complicity with the terms of the Racial Contract itself.

The Racial Contract is an exploitation contract that creates global European economic domination and national white racial privilege.

The classic social contract, as I have detailed, is primarily moral/political in nature. But it is also economic in the background sense that the point of leaving the state of nature is in part to secure a stable environment for the industrious appropriation of the world. (After all, one famous definition of politics is that it is about who gets what and why.) Thus even in Locke's moralized state of nature, where people generally do obey natural law, he is concerned about the safety of private property, indeed proclaiming that "the great and chief end therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the Preservation of their Property."⁴² And in Hobbes's famously amoral and unsafe state of nature, we are told that "there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth."⁴³ So part of the point of bringing society into existence, with its laws and enforcers of the law, is to protect what you have accumulated.

What, then, is the nature of the economic system of the new society? The general contract does not itself prescribe a particular model or particular schedule of property rights, requiring only that the "equality" in the prepolitical state be somehow preserved. This provision may be variously interpreted as a self-interested surrender to an absolutist Hobbesian government that itself determines property rights, or a Lockean insistence that private property accumulated in the moralized state of nature be respected by the constitutionalist government. Or more radical political theorists, such as socialists and feminists, might argue that state-of-nature equality actually mandates class or gender economic egalitarianism in society. So, different political interpretations of the initial moral egalitarianism can be advanced, but the general background idea is that the equality of human beings in the state of nature is somehow (whether as equality of opportunity or as equality of outcome) supposed to carry over into the economy of the created sociopolitical order, leading to a system of voluntary human intercourse and exchange in which exploitation is precluded.

By contrast, the economic dimension of the Racial Contract is the most salient, foreground rather than background, since the Racial Contract is calculatedly aimed at economic exploitation. The whole point of establishing a moral hierarchy and juridically partitioning the polity according to race is to secure and legitimate the privileging of those individuals designated as white/persons and the exploitation of those individuals

designated as nonwhite/subpersons. There are other benefits accruing from the Racial Contract—far greater political influence, cultural hegemony, the psychic payoff that comes from knowing one is a member of the *Herrenvolk* (what W. E. B. Du Bois once called “the wages of whiteness”)⁴⁴—but the bottom line is material advantage. Globally, the Racial Contract creates Europe as the continent that dominates the world; locally, within Europe and the other continents, it designates Europeans as the privileged race.

The challenge of explaining what has been called “**the European miracle**”—the rise of Europe to global domination—has long exercised both academic and lay opinion.⁴⁵ How is it that a formerly peripheral region on the outskirts of the Asian land mass, at the far edge of the trade routes, remote from the great civilizations of Islam and the East, was able in a century or two to achieve global political and economic dominance? The explanations historically given by Europeans themselves have varied tremendously, from the straightforwardly racist and geographically determinist to the more subtly environmentalist and culturalist. But what they have all had in common, even those influenced by Marxism, is their tendency to depict this development as essentially autochthonous, their tendency to privilege some set of internal variables and correspondingly downplay or ignore altogether the role of colonial conquest and African slavery. Europe made it on its own, it is said, because of the peculiar characteristics of Europe and Europeans.

Thus whereas no reputable historian today would espouse the frankly biologicistic theories of the past, which made Europeans (in both pre- and post-Darwinian accounts) inherently the most advanced race, as contrasted with the backward/less evolved races elsewhere, the thesis of European specialness and exceptionalism is still presupposed. It is still assumed that rationalism and science, innovativeness and inventiveness found their special home here, as against the intellectual stagnation and traditionalism of the rest of the world, so that Europe was therefore destined in advance to occupy the special position in global history it has. James Blaut calls this the theory, or “super-theory” (an umbrella covering many different versions: theological, cultural, biologicistic, geographical, technological, etc.), of “Eurocentric diffusionism,” according to which European progress is seen as “natural” and asymmetrically determinant of the fate of non-Europe.⁴⁶ Similarly, Sandra Harding, in her anthology on the “racial” economy of science, cites “the assumption that Europe functions autonomously from other parts of the world; that Europe is its own origin, final end, and agent; and that Europe and people of European descent in the Americas and elsewhere owe nothing to the rest of the world.”⁴⁷

Unsurprisingly, black and Third World theorists have traditionally dissented from this notion of happy divine or natural European dispensation. They have claimed, quite to the

contrary, that there is a crucial causal connection between European advance and the unhappy fate of the rest of the world. One classic example of such scholarship from a half century ago was the Caribbean historian Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*, which argued that the profits from African slavery helped to make the industrial revolution possible, so that internalist accounts were fundamentally mistaken.⁴⁸ And in recent years, with decolonization, the rise of the New Left in the United States, and the entry of more alternative voices into the academy, this challenge has deepened and broadened. There are variations in the authors' positions—for example, Walter Rodney, Samir Amin, André Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein⁴⁹—but the basic theme is that the exploitation of the empire (the bullion from the great gold and silver mines in Mexico and Peru, the profits from plantation slavery, the fortunes made by the colonial companies, the general social and economic stimulus provided by the opening up of the “New World”) was to a greater or lesser extent crucial in enabling and then consolidating the takeoff of what had previously been an economic backwater. It was far from the case that Europe was specially destined to assume economic hegemony; there were a number of centers in Asia and Africa of a comparable level of development which could potentially have evolved in the same way. But the European ascent closed off this development path for others because it forcibly inserted them into a colonial network whose exploitative relations and extractive mechanisms prevented autonomous growth.

Overall, then, **colonialism “lies at the heart” of the rise of Europe.**⁵⁰ The economic unit of analysis needs to be Europe as a whole, since it is not always the case that the colonizing nations directly involved always benefited in the long term. Imperial Spain, for example, still feudal in character, suffered massive inflation from its bullion imports. But through trade and financial exchange, others launched on the capitalist path, such as Holland, profited. Internal national rivalries continued, of course, but this common identity based on the transcontinental exploitation of the non-European world would in many cases be politically crucial, generating a sense of Europe as a cosmopolitan entity engaged in a common enterprise, underwritten by race. As Victor Kiernan puts it, “All countries within the European orbit benefited however, as Adam Smith pointed out, from colonial contributions to a common stock of wealth, bitterly as they might wrangle over ownership of one territory or another.... [T]here was a sense in which all Europeans shared in a heightened sense of power engendered by the successes of any of them, as well as in the pool of material wealth . . . that the colonies produced.”⁵¹

Today, correspondingly, though formal decolonization has taken place and in Africa and Asia black, brown, and yellow natives are in office, ruling independent nations, the global economy is essentially dominated by the former colonial powers, their offshoots (Euro-United States, Euro-Canada), and their international financial institutions, lending

agencies, and corporations. (As previously observed, the notable exception, whose history confirms rather than challenges the rule, is Japan, which escaped colonization and, after the Meiji Restoration, successfully embarked on its own industrialization.) Thus one could say that the world is essentially dominated by white capital. Global figures on income and property ownership are, of course, broken down nationally rather than racially, but if a transnational racial disaggregation were to be done, it would reveal that whites control a percentage of the world's wealth grossly disproportionate to their numbers. Since there is no reason to think that the chasm between First and Third Worlds (which largely coincides with this racial division) is going to be bridged—vide the abject failure of various United Nations plans from the “development decade” of the 1960s onward—it seems undeniable that for years to come, the planet will be white dominated. With the collapse of communism and the defeat of Third World attempts to seek alternative paths, the West reigns supreme, as celebrated in a London Financial Times headline: “The fall of the Soviet bloc has left the IMF and G7 to rule the world and create a new imperial age.”⁵² Economic structures have been set in place, causal processes established, whose outcome is to pump wealth from one side of the globe to another, and which will continue to work largely independently of the ill will/good will, racist/antiracist feelings of particular individuals. This globally color-coded distribution of wealth and poverty has been produced by the Racial Contract and in turn reinforces adherence to it in its signatories and beneficiaries.

Moreover, it is not merely that Europe and the former white settler states are globally dominant but that within them, where there is a significant nonwhite presence (indigenous peoples, descendants of imported slaves, voluntary nonwhite immigration), whites continue to be privileged vis-à-vis nonwhites. The old structures of formal, de jure exclusion have largely been dismantled, the old explicitly biologicistic ideologies largely abandoned⁵³—the Racial Contract, as will be discussed later, is continually being rewritten—but opportunities for nonwhites, though they have expanded, remain below those for whites. The claim is not, of course, that all whites are better off than all nonwhites, but that, as a statistical generalization, the objective life chances of whites are significantly better.

As an example, consider the United States. A series of books has recently documented the decline of the integrationist hopes raised by the 1960s and the growing intransigence and hostility of whites who think they have “done enough,” despite the fact that the country continues to be massively segregated, median black family incomes have begun falling by comparison to white family incomes after some earlier closing of the gap, the so-called “black underclass” has basically been written off, and reparations for slavery and post-Emancipation discrimination have never been paid, or, indeed, even seriously

considered.⁵⁴ Recent work on racial inequality by Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro suggests that wealth is more important than income in determining the likelihood of future racial equalization, since it has a cumulative effect that is passed down through intergenerational transfer, affecting life chances and opportunities for one's children. Whereas in 1988 black households earned sixty-two cents for every dollar earned by white households, the comparative differential with regard to wealth is much greater and, arguably, provides a more realistically negative picture of the prospects for closing the racial gap: "Whites possess nearly twelve times as much median net worth as blacks, or \$43,800 versus \$ 3,700. In an even starker contrast, perhaps, the average white household controls \$6,999 in net financial assets while the average black household retains no NFA nest egg whatsoever." Moreover, the analytic focus on wealth rather than income exposes how illusory the much-trumpeted rise of a "black middle class" is: "Middle-class blacks, for example, earn seventy cents for every dollar earned by middle-class whites but they possess only fifteen cents for every dollar of wealth held by middleclass whites." This huge disparity in white and black wealth is not remotely contingent, accidental, fortuitous; it is the direct outcome of American state policy and the collusion with it of the white citizenry. In effect, "materially, whites and blacks constitute two nations,"⁵⁵ the white nation being constituted by the American Racial Contract in a relationship of structured racial exploitation with the black (and, of course, historically also the red) nation.

A collection of papers from panels organized in the 1980s by the National Economic Association, the professional organization of black economists, provides some insight into the mechanics and the magnitude of such exploitative transfers and denials of opportunity to accumulate material and human capital. It takes as its title *The Wealth of Races*—an ironic tribute to Adam Smith's famous book *The Wealth of Nations*—and analyzes the different varieties of discrimination to which blacks have been subjected: slavery, employment discrimination, wage discrimination, promotion discrimination, white monopoly power discrimination against black capital, racial price discrimination in consumer goods, housing, services, insurance, etc.⁵⁶ Many of these, by their very nature, are difficult to quantify; moreover, there are costs in anguish and suffering that can never really be compensated. Nonetheless, those that do lend themselves to calculation offer some remarkable figures. (The figures are unfortunately dated; readers should multiply by a factor that takes fifteen years of inflation into account.) If one were to do a calculation of the cumulative benefits (through compound interest) from labor market discrimination over the forty-year period from 1929 to 1969 and adjust for inflation, then in 1983 dollars, the figure would be over \$1.6 trillion.⁵⁷ An estimate for the total of "diverted income" from slavery, 1790 to 1860, compounded and translated into 1983 dollars, would yield the sum of \$2.1 trillion to \$4.7 trillion.⁵⁸ And if one were to try to work out the cumulative

value, with compound interest, of unpaid slave labor before 1863, underpayment since 1863, and denial of opportunity to acquire land and natural resources available to white settlers, then the total amount required to compensate blacks “could take more than the entire wealth of the United States.”⁵⁹

So this gives an idea of the centrality of racial exploitation to the U.S. economy and the dimensions of the payoff for its white beneficiaries from one nation’s Racial Contract. But this very centrality, these very dimensions render the topic taboo, virtually undiscussed in the debates on justice of most white political theory. If there is such a backlash against affirmative action, what would the response be to the demand for the interest on the unpaid forty acres and a mule? These issues cannot be raised because they go to the heart of the real nature of the polity and its structuring by the Racial Contract. White moral theory’s debates on justice in the state must therefore inevitably have a somewhat farcical air, since they ignore the central injustice on which the state rests. (No wonder a hypothetical contractarianism that evades the actual circumstances of the polity’s founding is preferred!)

Both globally and within particular nations, then, white people, Europeans and their descendants, continue to benefit from the Racial Contract, which creates a world in their cultural image, political states differentially favoring their interests, an economy structured around the racial exploitation of others, and a moral psychology (not just in whites but sometimes in nonwhites also) skewed consciously or unconsciously toward privileging them, taking the status quo of differential racial entitlement as normatively legitimate, and not to be investigated further.

Notes

1. Otto Gierke termed these respectively the *Gesellschaftsvertrag* and the *Herrschaftsvertrag*. For a discussion, see, for example, Barker, Introduction, Social Contract; and Lessnoff, Social Contract, chap. 3.
2. Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, pt. 1.
3. In speaking generally of “whites,” I am not, of course, denying that there are gender relations of domination and subordination or, for that matter, class relations of domination and subordination within the white population. I am not claiming that race is the only axis of social oppression. But race is what I want to focus on; so in the absence of that chimerical entity, a unifying theory of race, class, and gender oppression, it seems to me that one has to make generalizations that it would be stylistically cumbersome to qualify at every point. So these should just be taken as read. Nevertheless, I do want to insist that my overall picture is roughly accurate, i.e., that whites do in general benefit from white supremacy

(though gender and class differentiation mean, of course, that they do not benefit equally) and that historically white racial solidarity has overridden class and gender solidarity. Women, subordinate classes, and nonwhites may be oppressed in common, but it is not a common oppression: the structuring is so different that it has not led to any common front between them. Neither white women nor white workers have as a group (as against principled individuals) historically made common cause with nonwhites against colonialism, white settlement, slavery, imperialism, jim crow, apartheid. We all have multiple identities, and, to this extent, most of us are both privileged and disadvantaged by different systems of domination. But white racial identity has generally triumphed over all others; it is race that (transgender, transclass) has generally determined the social world and loyalties, the lifeworld, of whites—whether as citizens of the colonizing mother country, settlers, nonslaves, or beneficiaries of the “color bar” and the “color line. There has been no comparable, spontaneously crystallizing transracial “workers” world or transracial “female” world: race is the identity around which whites have usually closed ranks. Nevertheless, as a concession, a semantic signal of this admitted gender privileging within the white population, by which white women’s personhood is originally virtual, dependent on their having the appropriate relation (daughter, sister, wife) to the white male, I will sometimes deliberately use the non-gender-neutral “men.” For some recent literature on these problematic intersections of identity, see, for example, Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism : Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991).

4. Rousseau, *Social Contract*; Hobbes, *Leviathan*.
5. For a discussion of the two versions, see Kymlicka, “The Social Contract Tradition.”
6. Hobbes’s judgment that “INJUSTICE, is no other than the not Performance of Covenant,” *Leviathan*, p. 100, has standardly been taken as a statement of moral conventionalism. Hobbes’s egalitarian social morality is based not on the moral equality of humans, but on the fact of a rough parity of physical power and mental ability in the state of nature (chap. 13). Within this framework, the Racial Contract would then be the natural outcome of a systematic disparity in power—of weaponry rather than individual strength—between expansionist Europe and the rest of the world. This could be said to be neatly summed up in Hilaire Belloc’s famous little ditty: “Whatever happens, we have got / The Maxim Gun, and they have not.” Hilaire Belloc, “The Modern Traveller,” quoted in John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (1975; rpt. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Paperbacks, 1986), p. 94. Or at an earlier stage, in the conquest of the Americas, the musket and the steel sword.
7. See, for example, A. P. d’Entreves, *Natural Law: An Introduction to Legal Philosophy*, 2d rev. ed.

- (1951; rpt. London: Hutchinson, 1970).
8. Locke, *Second Treatise of Two Treatises of Government*, p. 269.
 9. Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 230–32.
 10. See Aithur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948).
 11. For the notion of “epistemological communities,” see recent work in feminist theory—for example, Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, eds., *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
 12. Thus Ward Churchill, a Native American, speaks sardonically of “fantasies of the master race.” Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema, and the Colonization of American Indians*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1992); William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (New York: Ace Science Fiction Books, 1984).
 13. Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1979); V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of “the Other” and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. Michael D. Barber (1992; rpt. New York: Continuum, 1995); Robert Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978); Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L. P. Silet, eds., *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980); George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (1971; rpt. Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987); Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (1986; rpt. London: Routledge, 1992).
 14. Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (New York: International, 1972), p. 120.
 15. Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (1961; rpt. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991).
 16. V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: Black Man, Yellow Man, and White Man in an Age of Empire* (1969; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500–c. 1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

17. Pagden, Lord pp. 1–2.
18. Robert A. Williams Jr., “The Algebra of Federal Indian Law: The Hard Trail of Decolonizing and Americanizing the White Man’s Indian Jurisprudence,” *Wisconsin Law Review* 1986 (1986): 229. See also Robert A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
19. Williams, “Algebra,” pp. 230–31, 233. See also Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 19.
20. Williams, “Algebra”; Hanke, Aristotle.
21. Allen Carey-Webb, “Other-Fashioning: The Discourse of Empire and Nation in Lope de Vega’s *El Nuevo mundo descubierto por Cristobal Colon*,” in *Amerindian Images and the Legacy of Columbus*, ed. René Jara and Nicholas Spadaccini, *Hispanic Issues*, 9 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 433–34.
22. Philip D. Curtin, Introduction, to *Imperialism*, ed. Curtin (New York: Walker, 1971), p. xiii.
23. Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*, 2d ed. (New York: Wiley, 1978).
24. Pagden, *Lords*, chap. 1.
25. Williams, “Algebra,” p. 253.
26. Justice Joseph Story, quoted in Williams, “Algebra,” p. 256.
27. *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, 1857, in *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study*, ed. Paula S. Rothenberg, 3d ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), p. 323.
28. Excerpt from Jules Harmand, *Domination et colonisation* (1910), in Curtin, *Imperialism*, pp. 294–98.
29. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), pp. xiv, xiii.
30. Harold R. Isaacs, “Color in World Affairs,” *Foreign Affairs* 47 (1969): 235, 246. See also Benjamin P. Bowser, ed., *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1995).
31. Helen Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government’s Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (1881; rpt. New York: Indian Head Books, 1993). In her classic expose, Jackson concludes (pp. 337–38): “It makes little difference . . . where one

opens the record of the history of the Indians; every page and every year has its dark stain. The story of one tribe is the story of all, varied only by differences of time and place.... [T]he United States Government breaks promises now [1880] as deftly as then [1795], and with an added ingenuity from long practice.” Jackson herself, it should be noted, saw Native Americans as having a “lesser right,” since there was no question about the “fairness of holding that ultimate sovereignty belonged to the civilized discoverer, as against the savage barbarian.” To think otherwise would merely be “feeble sentimentalism” (pp. 10-11). But she did at least want this lesser right recognized.

32. See, for example, David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
33. Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of IndianHating and Empire-Building* (New York: Meridian, 1980), p. 332.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 102. See also Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); and Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America* (1979; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).
35. A. Grenfell Price, *White Settlers and Native Peoples: An Historical Study of Racial Contacts between English-Speaking Whites and A boriginal Peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (1950; rpt. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972); A. Grenfell Price, *The Western Invasions of the Pacific and Its Continents* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); van den Berghe, *Race*; Louis Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964); F. S. Stevens, ed., *Racism: The Australian Experience*, 3 vols. (New York: Taplinger, 1972); Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1982). Price’s books are valuable sources in comparative history, but—though progressive by the standards of the time—they need to be treated with caution, since their figures and attitudes are both now somewhat dated. In *White Settlers*, for example, the Indian population north of the Rio Grande is estimated at fewer than 850,000, whereas estimates today are ten to twenty times higher, and Price speculates that the Indians were ‘less advanced than their white conquerors’ because they had smaller brains (pp. 6–7).
36. Van den Berghe, *Race*, p. 18.
37. C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Tim Crow*, 3d ed. (1955; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the*

Underclass (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

38. See, for example, Kiernan, *Lords*; V. G. Kiernan, *Imperialism and its Contradictions*, ed. Harvey J. Kaye (New York: Routledge, 1995); D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (1966; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1982); Pagden, *Lords*; Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers, and the African Elite* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Henri Brunschwig, *French Colonialism, 1871–1914: Myths and Realities*, trans. William Granville Brown (1964; rpt. New York: Praeger, 1966); David Healy, *U. S. Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).

39. Said, *Culture*, p. 8.

40. Kiernan, *Lords*, p. 24.

41. Linda Alcoff outlines an attractive, distinctively Latin American ideal of hybrid racial identity in her “Mestizo Identity,” in *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity*, ed. Naomi Zack (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), pp. 257–78. Unfortunately, however, this ideal has yet to be realized. For an exposure of the Latin American myths of “racial democracy” and a race-transcendent mestizaje, and an account of the reality of the ideal of blanqueamiento (whitening) and the continuing subordination of blacks and the darker-skinned throughout the region, see, for example, Minority Rights Group, ed., *No Longer Invisible: Afro-Latin Americans Today* (London: Minority Rights, 1995); and Bowser, *Racism and Anti-Racism*.

42. Locke, *Second Treatise*, pp. 350–51. Since Locke also uses “property” to mean rights, this is not quite as one-dimensional a vision of government as it sounds.

43. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 89.

44. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (1935; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1992).

45. See Eric Jones, *The European Miracle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). My discussion here follows J. M. Blaut et al., 1492: *The Debate on Colonialism, Eurocentrism, and History* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1992); and J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer’s Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

46. Blaut, 1492; Blaut, *Colonizer’s Model*.

47. Sandra Harding, Introduction, to Harding, ed., *The “Racial” Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 2.

48. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944; rpt. New York: Capricorn Books, 1966).
49. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972; rpt. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974); Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore (1988: rpt. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989); André Gunder Frank, *World Accumulation, 1492–1789* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1974–1988).
50. Blaut, 1492, p. 3.
51. Kiernan, *Imperialism*, pp. 98, 149.
52. Quoted in Noam Chomsky, *Year 501: The Conquest Continues* (Boston: South End Press, 1993), p. 61.
53. But see Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray's bestseller *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994), as a sign that the older, straightforwardly racist theories may be making a comeback.
54. See, for example: Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Scribner's, 1992); Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: BasicBooks, 1992); Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*; Stephen Steinberg, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Tom Wicker, *Tragic Failure: Racial Integration in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1996).
55. Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge 1995), pp. 86, 7.
56. Richard F. America, ed., *The Wealth of Races: The Present Value of Benefits from Past Injustices* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990). For another ironic tribute, whose subject is the international distribution of wealth, see Malcolm Caldwell, *The Wealth of Some Nations* (London: Zed Press, 1977).
57. David H. Swinton, "Racial Inequality and Reparations," in *America, Wealth of Races*, p. 156.
58. James Marketti, "Estimated Present Value of Income Diverted during Slavery," in *America, Wealth of Races*, p. 107.
59. Robert S. Browne, "Achieving Parity through Reparations," in *America, Wealth of Races*, p. 204; Swinton, "Racial Inequality," p. 156.

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